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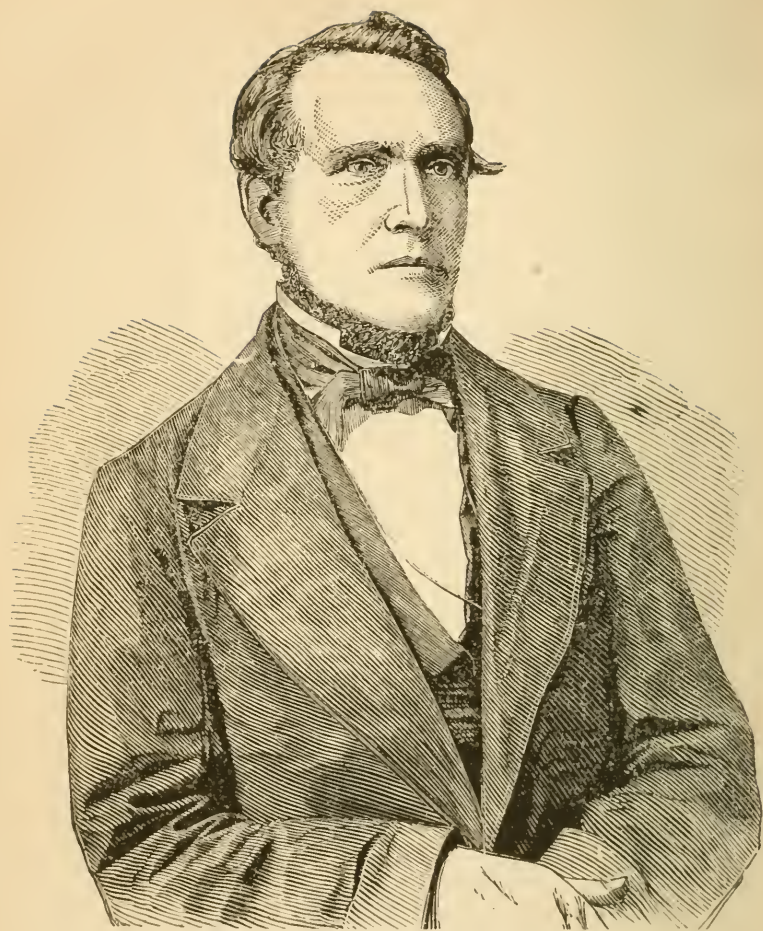
Respect of the
author

To

Rev W. J. R. Taylor

(Ashworth)





J. Ashworth

FOURTH EDITION.
CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.

A TREATISE

ON THE

SCRIPTURAL OBLIGATION, METHOD.
MEASURE AND PRIVILEGE

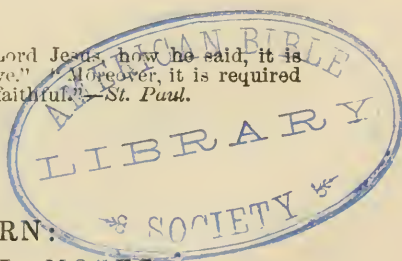
OF

SYSTEMIZED BENEFICENCE.

BY REV. J. ASHWORTH,

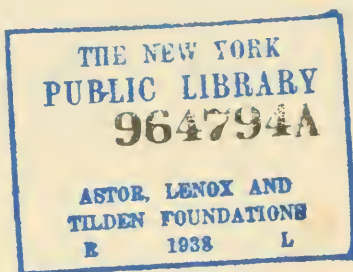
OF EAST GENESEE CONFERENCE.

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive." "Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."—*St. Paul.*



AUBURN:
WILLIAM J. MOSES.
1861.

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AUBURN N. Y.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP:

BY REV. J. ASHWORTH.

JUDGMENT OF REVIEWERS.

"I give it as my deliberate opinion, that no person of ordinary intelligence and honesty can read this book without having his mind convinced and his heart enlarged."—*N. W. C. Advocate*.

"I have read it with much interest, and could wish that a copy of it were in the hands of every professor of religion in the land. * * It is discussed in all its parts, with marked ability and earnestness. The book is favorably received, and is doing a good work in the denomination to which the author belongs; and being entirely free from any sectarian bias, is equally well adapted for circulation among other denominations. The result would unquestionably be most happy, if such works as this were more circulated among the members of our Churches."—*Genesee Evangelist* (Presbyterian.)

"This is an excellent book, written in an earnest, pointed style; clear, logical and evangelical. It will do good. Get the book and read it."—*Northern Christian Advocate*.

"This work has real merit. It was selected by Judge McLean, from a large number of competing volumes for the prize of \$300; and, in our judgment, it is better than the work to which the award was given."—*The Northern Independent*.

"This work is inestimable in its value to Christian readers; and no family should be without it in their midst. It is adjudged by the most competent to be the best work ever written upon this subject."—*Steuben Farmer's Advocate*.

"Christian Stewardship, by Rev. J. Ashworth, is a work which we have read with pleasure and profit. * * The main positions taken are fortified by a collection of examples, personal and collective, that cannot fail to make a deep impression, and do good. In our judgment, it would work a wonderful change in the financial transactions of the Church, could this valuable treatise have, as it merits, an extensive circulation."—*Wesleyan*.

Rev. Bishop Waugh says: "CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP, by Rev. J. Ashworth. This is an excellent book, calculated to instruct and move the reader. I hope it will have an extensive circulation."

* A B S

MAY 5, 1938

Hon. J. McLean, of the United States Supreme Court, says: "It has high merit, and cannot fail to do much good."

Rev. R. Scott, D. D., of Dublin city, says, in a letter to the author: * * "Your work on Systematic Beneficence I have read with care and interest. The subject, in my judgment, is the one most needed by the Church, nor can your clear, practical method of treating it fail to produce conviction in the mind of the candid reader."

Rev. A. C. George says: "This is an excellent book, and ought to have an extensive circulation. The style is unexceptionable, the arrangement admirable, the argument complete and triumphant. It is a book which was needed; notwithstanding all that has been published on the subject, it will do good."

Rev. H. R. Clarke says: "I have been much interested reading CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP, by Rev. J. Ashworth. Its circulation and perusal must do good."

Rev. J. C. Vandercook says: "I have just read the new work on Christian Stewardship, by Rev. J. Ashworth. * * It cannot fail to do good wherever it is read. 100,000 copies ought to be scattered through the land."

Rev. I. McMahon, Principal of R. U. Seminary, says, through Zion's Herald: " * * I have read it carefully with pleasure and profit. I consider it one of the very best works on benevolence ever issued from the press. I think it would be almost an impossibility to read it and not have the heart excited to liberality."

Rev. D. D. Buck says, in the N. C. Advocate: "I have just finished reading the treatise on Systematic Beneficence by Rev. J. Ashworth. * * As a plain, Scriptural, practical treatise, I doubt if it has a superior. I am not surprised that Hon. J. McLean, after reading the manuscript, considered this among the very best, if not in fact the best of the many that were written for the prize. I also take pleasure in commending this work, because the author himself, as I have reason to believe, practices what he urges with so much force upon others. The ministerial associates of Br. Ashworth will all bear witness to his habitual readiness to give his name, his services and his money, to every good enterprise."

This voluntary expression of opinion is endorsed by the following influential ministers.

"We, the undersigned, most cordially concur in the above opinion of Rev. D. D. Buck :

W. H. DE PUY,	D. NUTTEN,	W. H. GOODWIN,
SCHUYLER SEGAR,	J. M. PARK,	A. SUTHERLAND
JAMES LANDRETH,	J. J. BROWN,	J. N. BROWN,
J. L. EDSON,	M. WHEELER,	B. SHIPMAN.

Rev. C. Prindle, editor of the *American Wesleyan*, and Book Agent at Syracuse, says: "This is really one of the most valuable treatise of the Scriptural doctrines of Christian Benevolence that we have ever read. . . . We earnestly wish that a copy of this volume could be placed in every family in our connection. The benefits to the reader, and the cause of God in general, would be greatly increased, we have no doubt." The sincerity of this commendation is evinced by sending his order in advance for four hundred copies of the forth-coming edition.

President Nellis, of *Victoria College*, says in the *Christian Guardian*: "Allow me, through your paper, to call attention to an excellent work on the subject of proportionate giving. I refer to a book entitled *Christian Stewardship*, written by the Rev. J. Ashworth, a Methodist minister of the East Genesee Conference. This treatise is short, cheap and practical, and is well adapted for popular reading. It may, I presume, be obtained through our Book-Steward, in Toronto. . . .—U. V. College.
"S. S. N."

Rev. H. Mattison says: "From a careful perusal of this work, I am prepared to say, that in my opinion, it is the best treatise upon the subject that has yet been published. May, 1859."

"Among a number of works offered for a prize of \$300, this was selected by the Committee as one of the best five. Judge McLean, of the United States Supreme Court, one of the Committee, selected this as *the best of the five*. No award, however, was made at that time. The reading of this work will benefit all, even the most liberal; and to the mean, and stingy, and selfish, if not entirely beyond the reach of grace, we would advise a thorough perusal of this arousing appeal, without a moment's delay."—*Rural New Yorker*.

"It would probably have received the prize, had the award not been postponed till another competitor, who had the advantage of perusing the whole of the essays previously written, could prepare another. The author has received the highest commendations from the most eminent Church men."—*Rochester Democrat and American*.

"I have carefully read the treatise of Rev. J. Ashworth, pastor of the Cornhill Church, in Rochester, on 'Systemized Benevolence,' and I do sincerely and earnestly recommend it to the perusal of all christian ministers and people. It is a concise and powerful appeal in behalf of systemized benevolence.
J. P. DURBIN."

The author of "Lights and Shades of Missionary Life" says: "I have carefully read this work, and consider it a valuable contribution to our religious literature. . . . The author has succeeded in giving us *multum in parvo*.
J. H. PITZEL."

Rev. I. S. Bingham, editor of N. C. Advocate, says: "Its merits are fully endorsed by competent judges. We could heartily wish that every Christian in the land would read it. . . . We regard it as No. 1 among the many works that have recently appeared upon the great subject of which it treats."

The author of "Life in the Itinerancy," &c., &c., says: "I have been reading this book in connection with others on the same subject, and am satisfied that no better work on systematic beneficence is published among us. There is no department of religious duty, or religious privilege, in which our people need elementary instruction so much as this; and I doubt whether it can be imparted in any better way than by the circulation of this book. . . . Brethren, let us send for the book, and get it among the people.

L. D. DAVIS."

Ask your minister whether he has any for sale. If not, tell him to send for one for you, to Wm. J. Moses, the Publisher, at Auburn, N. Y., or to Carlton & Porter, 200 Mulberry-street, N. Y., or to Rev. C. Prindle, Syracuse, or to the author, on his charge in the East Genesee Conference. Retail price 50 cents. Fancy binding and gilt edges, 65 cents. Liberal discount to wholesale purchasers.

INTRODUCTION.

This Treatise was written, in compliance with a proposal made by the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for a prize essay on the subject of Systematic Benevolence—one of the most important themes for consideration in Christendom, at the present time. It is evidently felt to be the great question of the day. Hence the repeated proposals for prize essays, on this subject, which have recently been made by several philanthropic societies in Europe and America, enlisting the pen of about *three hundred* able essayists. The interest which the writer of this essay felt in the theme, not the recompense of reward, induced him to write, for the purpose was formed, while writing, if any prize should be awarded, it should be appropriated to some benevolent enterprise. Though originally written in 1853, some statistics and other references will indicate the fact that it has since been transcribed and modified. From the various essays presented to the first committee of adjudication appointed by the Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, this, with four others, was selected, “as being superior to the rest,” in the judgment of the committee.

The Hon. John McLean, of the United States Supreme Court, selected one of these five, which he recommended as the prize essay; and Bishop Waugh selected and recom-

mended another of them. But the majority of the adjudicators decided not to award the prize to any one of these writers. It should be known that Rev. A. Stevens, who finally obtained the honor of writing the most acceptable essay, had the peculiar advantage of reading all the other manuscripts, as one of the adjudicators, during the same year, too, in which he tells us he wrote his book.* One of the writers asked Rev. J. T. Peck if it was admissible for the competitors to examine each other's essays while in the possession of the committee. "O, no; that would not be fair," was the response. Was it fair, then, for Rev. A. Stevens to read all of them, and have some of them in his office, to examine, when inclination might dictate, for ten months of the year in which he wrote his essay?

The chairman of the committee requested the writer of this essay, in case it were taken from the committee for emendation, to "be sure and return it for the second adjudication, as it was adjudged by the first committee to be as good as any presented." The thought of revising the essay occurred, and a note was sent to Judge McLean, giving a description of this essay, and the number by which the adjudicators distinguished it; soliciting his advice, in case I should spend the time to re-write, wherein it would need most attention — whether in the general plan, the arguments, or the style, it was most defective.

In answering my note, he said: "Each of the essays which I examined, in my judgment, did great credit to the writers. If I mistake not, I selected the number you specify as the *Prize Essay*, and so stated to the gentlemen with whom I was associated for that purpose. I am not absolutely cer-

* A note on page 21 of A. Stevens' book says, "It was written in 1854."

tain a- to the number, but I think the hand-writing was the same as your note. I hope you will publish the essay, as I should like to compare it with the one which may take the prize. Independently of the great merit of the composition, I feel some personal considerations, as my friends did not agree with me. I do not now recollect anything to correct in the plan, the arguments or the style. . . ." When acknowledging the reception of this letter, Judge McLean was asked whether he would favor the essay with a few introductory lines, providing his expressed wish for its publication should be complied with. To which he says, ". . . I will write to Mr. Phillips, of the Book Room at New York, for a copy of my letter on the subject of the essays. Indeed, the publication of that letter would be the best introduction that I could give. I hope soon to procure a copy of my letter, when I will write to you. . . ."

Soon afterwards, I met with Rev. Z. Phillips, and he informed me that "Judge McLean had written for a copy of his letter, but Rev. J. T. Peck had the letter in his possession, and no copy had been sent." After the lapse of six months, I wrote to Rev. J. T. Peck, at the Book Room, asking whether the request of Judge McLean was to be granted or not. But he declined giving a copy, saying, "The letter which relates to the several essays read, would not be available to you," &c. Modesty would incline mankind generally to concede the right to such a man as the Hon. J. McLean, of judging for himself, as to the "*availability*" or propriety of publishing that letter. Why not as "*available*" and appropriate to publish the opinion of Judge McLean, relative to the comparative merits of the several essays submitted to him for adjudication, as for Rev. J. T. Peck and others to publish their opinion, that the "*Great*

Reform," written by Rev. A. Stevens, was sufficiently distinguished above all the other essays submitted to their judgment, to entitle him to the award of \$300.

In lieu of the withheld letter, we give the following favorable recommendation, which was sent for publication in this essay.

"I take pleasure in recommending the publication of an essay on the subject of Systematic Beneficence, by the Rev. J. Ashworth, of Rogersville, N. Y., which I read with attention, one or two years ago. It was written with much ability and research, and if published and circulated, in my judgment, it cannot fail strongly to recommend the interesting subject discussed.

JOHN MCLEAN."

"Cincinnati, 1855."

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CHAPTER I.

The Beneficence of God.

SEC. 1. *Implied in his Name and Nature.*

SEC. 2. *Confirmed by his Providence.*

SEC. 3. *Admitted by Common Consent.*

SEC. 4. *Man a Special Recipient.*

SEC. 5. *System apparent in the dissemination of the Divine Gifts.*

SEC. 1. One of the appropriate and distinguishing titles of God, as proclaimed by himself, signifies: The All-Sufficient and Bountiful Giver of all good, "Abundant in Goodness." "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand and^s satisfieth the desire of every living thing."

The benevolence of God, which inclines him to take pleasure in dispensing his gifts among

his creatures, is an essential part of the Divine nature. He is immutably and eternally the fountain of goodness. The overflowing of his beneficence is as boundless as his works. The celestial sphere, with its vast concourse of sentient intelligences, blessed with happiness to the full extent of their capacities, was the first production of his goodness.

But the wide extent of that celestial region was not sufficiently capacious for the development of his munificence. The boundaries of his beneficence must be enlarged. By his creative energy, innumerable other worlds were launched into the regions of space, peopled with living intelligences, to whom his goodness might be displayed in the dissemination of his gifts. Among those for our special observation, is the world which we inhabit, with its innumerable variety of living creatures, designed for happiness to the full extent of their capacities.

SEC. 2. *Confirmed by his Providence.*

The bounding herds that roam the forest, the finny tribes that sport in the waters, the feathered songsters whose cheerful voices are

ever attuned to chant their Maker's praise — whether skipping in the arbor, or light and free, soaring away in the blue ethereal — these all, infinite in their variety, proclaim with united voice, the goodness of God in his providence. “O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all : the earth is full of thy riches ; so is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships ; there is that Leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee ; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather : thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.—Ps. 104 : 24–28.

SEC. 3. *Admitted by Common Consent.*

Benevolence is a perfection of the Divine Nature, which all men cheerfully attribute to God. Whether we enquire of the profound philosopher, or of the simple child of nature, relative to this feature of the Divine character, we receive the same answer. “My Father,” says Copway, an Indian Chief, “taught me to call that Spirit, *Ka-sha-Mon-e-doo*, (benevolent

Spirit,) for his *ancestors taught him no other name* to give that Spirit who made the earth, with all its variety and smiling beauty." However varied the views and opinions of men may be relative to other features of the Divine character, here they harmonize. All look to him as "the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift."

SEC. 4. *Man a Special Recipient.*

Of all the creatures which God has made, man has most reason to speak of his goodness. In the Divine council, it was said, at the time of his creation, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Wherein this likeness was peculiar to man, may be spoken of in a succeeding chapter. Let it suffice to say, in this connection, that when, by the introduction of selfishness, this image of God was defaced, he set his heart on man to deliver him. Infinite Wisdom and Benevolence were called into exercise, to devise a plan, by which fallen man might be delivered from the consequences of sin, and fully restored to the image of his benevolent Creator. The amazing plan of redemption, so astonishing to angels and men,

was the result. "God so loved the world that he gave"—not an angel—no ! "He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." God *so* loved the world ! Who can tell how much that implies ? The Great Teacher does not attempt to tell. He has put an infinite meaning into that "*so*," and there left it for the eternal study and delight of angels and men.

What greater proof could we possibly have of the Divine Beneficence ? This may well be denominated the Riches of his Goodness.

What a demonstration has the Savior given of his love to fallen man, in laying down his life for our redemption ! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Washington exposed his life in defence of his country. LaFayette spent a fortune to promote the cause of our national freedom. But "*while we were yet enemies*, Christ died for us. This is the love of Christ "that passeth knowledge." Here we have Infinite Beneficence incarnate. Her form was seen, her voice was

heard, when the only begotten Son of God appeared on earth, to lay down his life for his enemies.

SEC. 5. *God is systematic in the dissemination of his Gifts.*

In the distribution of the gifts of Providence, the Ruler of the universe governs his acts by system.

To superficial observers, it might seem as if the bounties of his providence, scattered so profusely over the earth, were distributed by a careless hand, without much attention to order. So we might erroneously imagine, while looking, on a clear winter evening, upon the vast concave of the heavens, bespangled with innumerable shining orbs, that these luminaries were scattered through the regions of space, without any reference to order; but the observing astronomer, who marks the position and movement of each, learns that they are all controlled by invariable laws.

Similar traces of regularity may be seen in the government of God, pertaining to this world. He has given to man, who tills the ground, positive assurance, that he may rely on

a systematic arrangement, for "seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night," "while the earth remaineth."

Who can estimate the general confusion that would take place in all departments of society, by a derangement of this established system? Who would break up the fallow ground, if he had no assurance of seed time and harvest? Who would scatter his seed in the earth, if Divine Providence no longer gave assurance of seasonable showers and genial sun, to fertilize the earth? Who could live in our pestilent world, if God were to "gather the winds in his fist," and not permit them to go around the earth, to purify the atmosphere? The alternations of day and night, for labor and repose, are returned to man, with mathematical exactness.

The Giver of all good has systematically adapted the proportion of light to the eye, and the air we inhale is as nicely suited to all the purposes of respiration. A very slight deviation from the regular proportions of nitrogen and oxygen, which compose the atmosphere,

would result in the most unpleasant consequences. It is readily demonstrated by experiment, that if the proportion of oxygen in the air was diminished, a death-like languor would immediately be produced in our system ; and, on the other hand, if the full proportion of nitrogen were not given, then the result of inhaling the air would be an intensely hurried respiration and feverish excitement. All these blessings, as provided by a God of order, are precisely adjusted. Indeed, the entire economy of God, presents for our contemplation and for our example, a grand scheme of *systematic beneficence*, system upon system, all operating together in harmony.

Irregularity never can claim alliance to God. Upon all his works he leaves this inscription, in legible characters : “ God is not the author of confusion.” An English classic has said, “ Order is heaven’s first law.” At the time of creation, when “ the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” and out of chaos produced order.

We should ever bear in mind, that a want of system indicates a lack of wisdom, a lack of being God-like in this particular.

Before concluding this chapter, it may be well to remind the reader of that comprehensive precept recorded in I. Cor. 14 : 40, “Let *all things* be done decently and *in order*.” In view of this Scripture, and the example of system set by our Heavenly Father, would it not be well for all, and especially for those who profess to be the children of God, to resolve, without further procrastination, to fix on a scriptural *plan* of Christian beneficence ; “that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”—Matt. 5 : 45.

CHAPTER II.

Human Beneficence.

SEC. 1. *Originally designed by the Creator.*

SEC. 2. *Result of the Fall.*

SEC. 3. *Prevalence of Selfishness.*

SEC. 4. *Redemption the Antidote.*

SEC. 5. *Beneficence now demanded.*

SEC. 6. *A Criterion in Man's final Adjudication.*

SEC. 1. The Creator evidently designed man for a beneficent being. When it was said in the council of the Trinity, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:" this, perhaps, was the only feature of the Divine character peculiar to man.

Angels, as well as men, were created in righteousness and true holiness, but what race of created intelligences, save man, were endowed with the Godlike prerogative of imparting good

for the benefit of others, and thereby promoting their own enjoyment ?

Angels may have been designed, to represent the amount of happiness, which it is possible for God's creatures to *receive and enjoy* ; but man, the highly favored of the Lord, standing forth as the representative of his Creator, is endowed with ability to exercise the God-like prerogative of *imparting good*, to promote the benefit and happiness of others, and at the same time to realize in his own feelings, the import of those words of the Lord Jesus : " It is more blessed to give than to receive." Thus man was created.

SEC. 2. *Result of the Fall.*

When the subtle Tempter succeeded to implant the delusive and selfish idea, "*ye shall be as gods* ;" in the mind of our federal progenitors, he communicated an infection, which has been transmitted to all posterity.

Self was immediately enthroned as the great idol. The relations of men, to their Creator, and to each other were, at once subverted. The affections were alienated from God, the fountain of happiness. The love of God, which was de-

signed to hold each in affinity with the Creator; and all, in a state of adhesion to each other, was lost; and, like the suspension of the great law of attraction, in the material universe; leaving the several parts in a state of repulsion to each other, and the whole disjoined from God; so were men repelled from each other by the selfishness of their fallen and depraved nature. *Human beneficence*, and human happiness, were both wrecked together.

SEC. 3. *Prevalence of Selfishness.*

Soon after the image of God was effaced by the fall, the conflict of selfishness became so general that God himself declared, "the earth was filled with violence" and "cruelty." To this source we may trace most of the prevalent evils of our fallen world. "From whence come wars and fightings," with the long train of concomitant evils? Come they not hence, even of your lusts? To gratify these lusts of selfishness, oceans of human blood have been shed, and more money expended than would be necessary to send a missionary and a thousand Bibles to every section of the heathen world.

The sale of intoxicating drinks, so prevalent

and debasing, is continued for the sake of filthy lucre. Every man engaged in the business of dealing out the liquid poison to the poor inebriate, feels that it is a degrading and murderous employment—that the malediction of the inebriate's family rests upon him—that public sentiment brands him with odium—that God in his word is saying, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken."—Hab. 2 : 15. Yet such is the predominant love of money that he continues his nefarious traffic.

The distemper of selfishness is so universal that every man, previously to his conversion, realizes a strong propensity to set up his own interest, to the exclusion of every other, whether human or divine. And, after his regeneration, the Christian frequently realizes this proclivity of his fallen nature to be the most incurable of all the diseases of the soul. Among all the legion of evil spirits cast out, none come back for re-admittance more frequently than this. None is more subtle, nor more successful in decoying the good man from his allegiance to God. "This know, also, that in the last days,

perilous times shall come. For *men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.*”—II. Timothy 3 : 1-4.

What a long, dark catalogue of evil propensities, at the head of which the Spirit of Inspiration appropriately places *selfishness and covetousness*. Analyze any one of these specifications, and you will find selfishness there as an ingredient. Yet it is said that these persons have a “form of godliness.” What an erroneous opinion would we form of the beneficent Savior, were we to found that opinion on the spirit and conduct of some of his professed representatives on earth.

The spirit of the world has become so predominant, that it has perverted public sentiment, and reversed, in many instances, the use and meaning of language. When God spake to Cain about “*doing well*,” his words had an entirely different import from that which is

implied by such an expression at the present day. If a man be successful in the acquisition of wealth, he is *doing well*, according to the present vocabulary of the world, though he may be as wicked as Cain.

Go to Wall street, in New York, or to the business men of your own city or village, and enquire if such, or such a man, is *good*. By what criterion will they judge of his goodness—his virtue or his money? Would their thoughts recur at all to his moral qualities? If he is rich, his name is good. We are told in the word of God, that “a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches:” but how is it possible to get a good name among bankers and brokers, or other business men, without riches? The world speaks of a man as being worth little, or worth much, in proportion to the amount of his wealth. He may have any amount of knowledge in his head, and as much of the religion of Christ in his heart, but if he has no money in his pocket, he is worthless.

Hence there are many “that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in

destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil : which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”—I. Tim. 6 : 9, 10.

Many are more earnest in their efforts to obtain money than to secure the favor of God. Their thoughts are more intensely fixed on the acquisition of wealth, than on the heavenly inheritance. Who need wonder at the oft-repeated counsels and admonitions of the Scriptures pertaining to this worldly spirit ? “Take heed,” said the Savior, “and beware of covetousness.”—Luke 12 : 15.

“They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them ; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” “From the least even to the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness.”

SEC. 4. *Redemption the Antidote.*

The glorious scheme of redemption, by the death of Christ, was the restorative plan devised by the wisdom of God, as best calculated

to counteract the malignant influence of the fall.

We are so constituted that a manifestation of love toward us, produces a corresponding feeling in us. Hence the adaptation of this arrangement of Heaven to cause our selfishness to hide its face in shame forever, in view of this astonishing exhibition of God's love toward us. How is it possible for selfishness to stand out with an unblushing front in a redeemed soul, when that touching appeal is made, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—II. Cor. 8, 9.

Here lies the attractive, soul-subduing power of the cross. "I," said Jesus, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12 : 32.

By this display of wondrous love, he has become the moral magnet of the universe. When the human heart, surcharged with the repulsive influence of selfishness, is brought into contact with the cross, it becomes excited by a mysterious moral attraction, and by this power of the

cross men are drawn toward each other, while all are drawn toward Christ. So well calculated is the plan of redemption to restore the brotherhood of the race.

How surprising, that this efficient remedy should in so many cases fail to accomplish the design. What an inveterate disease is this epidemic of the soul, to resist the influence of such a divine antidote ! How seldom it accomplishes in *full* the desired result ! If an angelic being, who knew nothing more of the Church militant than that it consisted of a company of men, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, should come among us, what kind of creatures would he expect to find ? Would he not anticipate meeting with a company of one heart, and of one soul ?—scarcely knowing any separate interest or inclination, each vying with the other to be foremost in every good work, and all ready to spend or be spent, to promote the salvation of the unsaved ? What disappointment would he realize on witnessing so much selfishness and sordid love of the world ! Blood-bought men in the Church of Christ, hoarding earthly treasures—bracing

themselves against the most touching appeals, and refusing to impart to the rightful owner any proportion of their income, to build the waste places of Zion !

It is true, that God is not dependent on his creatures ; he might have made an arrangement to publish his Gospel by angels, who could have lived without temporal supplies ; or he might have employed the ravens to feed his ministers, as he did in the case of Elijah ; and preserve their garments from waxing old, as in the case of the Israelites, during their forty years' sojourn in the wilderness. With such a state of things, there would be but little opportunity to exercise our benevolent affections. Man would be deprived of much of the glorious privilege of being a co-worker together with God. Where can you find a genuine child of God who desires such an arrangement ? The opportunities for exercising our benevolent feelings are presented for our own good ; for the great purposes of redemption are all accomplished in us when we are transformed from a state of selfishness to one of perfect benevolence ; this exercise is calculated to accom-

plish the desired result ; and the wisdom which has led to the establishment of the present order of things, will lead to an inflexible support of the divine requirement.

SEC. 5. *Beneficence Demanded.*

It is not an optional matter with the Christian, whether he will or will not be beneficent. If he will be a child of God, he must be beneficent. This constitutes an essential part of Bible Christianity. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Hearken to some of the divine precepts, in relation to the duty of beneficence: "To do good, and to communicate, forget not." "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."—I. Tim. 6 : 17.

“He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully, shall also reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give ; not grudgingly or of necessity : for God loveth a cheerful giver.”—II. Cor. 9 : 6, 7.

“Freely ye have received, freely give.”—Matt. 10 : 8.

“I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20 : 35.

Love, the basis of all true beneficence, is more frequently and more emphatically enjoined than any other Christian duty. The first and great commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”—Matt. 22 : 37-40.

Here we have a concise and comprehensive summary of the whole duty of Christian benevolence.

Selfishness, the antagonistic principle, is most severely denounced in the holy Scriptures. The admonitions and injunctions of the great Teacher, pertaining to this sin, are very plain, pointed and positive.

When he emphatically assured those who heard his teaching, that they *could not serve God and Mammon*, it is immediately added, "The pharisees also *who were covetous*, heard all these things, and *they derided him*." They could not endure such teaching. Sharp arrows of the Almighty were aimed at the vitals of a popular sin, and they repelled his teaching with a sneer of derision : but the day is rapidly approaching when all such *pharisaical, covetous* professors, who now deride the teaching of Christ, and sneer away the claims of God, will be brought to a fearful test.

SEC. 6. *Beneficence will be the chief criterion in man's final adjudication.*

That the irrevocable decisions of the final judgment will be founded on the liberality or selfishness of the heart, as practically exemplified in the life, is evident from the account given by the Supreme Judge of the Universe.—

“ When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : and before him shall be gathered all nations : and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : &c. . . . Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : . . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels : For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.”—
Matt. 25 : 31–44.

By an immutable law of God, selfish and covetous men are shut out of the kingdom of

heaven. "No covetous man, who is an idolator hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."—Eph. 5 : 5.

The prohibitions and declarations which shut the selfish worldling out from the bliss of heaven, are not founded on the mere arbitrary will of God. They rest on the fundamental laws of the moral universe. The dispositions of these excluded characters totally unfit them for relishing the pleasures of the heavenly state. If it were possible for them to elude the observation of the Omniscient, and pass the celestial portals, the pleasures of heaven would be as uncongenial to their nature, as the shining sunbeams would be to a fish out of its native element.

CHAPTER III.

Divine Instruction

PERTAINING TO SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.

1. *To the Jewish Church.*
2. *To the Christian Church.*

Through every age of the world, the Lord of the Universe has reserved a portion of the goods placed in our possession, for himself. Even in Paradise, some of the fruit of the garden was reserved, of which it was worse than sacrilege for man to partake. Cain and Abel knew that the Creator required an offering at their hand. A standing decree remains on the statute book of the Almighty, affirming that "All the tithe of the land is the Lord's.— This significant form of expression shows that

God never has relinquished this claim. Hence, the accusation of *robbing God* is brought against all those who withhold these tithes and offerings, and refuse to honor the Lord with the first fruits of all their increase. But he who has said, "*Let all things be done decently, and in order,*" would not leave the system of beneficence to be attended in a fortuitous manner. All who have even a slight acquaintance with the Divine record, are aware that God taught his ancient people to regulate their Beneficence by strict rules of proportion.

Perhaps when it is stated, that they were required to appropriate to religious purposes about *three-tenths* of their income, some may not be prepared to yield an immediate and hearty assent. I apprehend that our inclination to lower down the claims of God in relation to ourselves and others, has done much toward giving currency to the prevalent notion, that God demanded *only one-tenth* from his people under the Mosaic dispensation. It must be evident to all who carefully read the documents of those times, that God's claim amounted nearly to one-third of their entire income.

One-tenth, “whether of the seed of the land, or the fruit of the tree, or the tithe of the flock,” was set apart for the support of the Levitical Priesthood. “Behold, I have given the children of Levi, all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.”—Num. 18 : 21.

In addition to this appropriation made to the Levites, another tithing was required, to keep up a religious festival held in the court of the Temple. “Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there,” &c.—Deut. 14 : 22. That this was a second tithing, is evident from the fact that it was made for an object distinct from the former. Matthew Henry says, in his commentary on the above text, “The productions of the ground were twice tithed, so that putting both together, a fifth part was devoted to God out of their increase.” (See Dr. Clarke also.)

Then they were required to pay the redemp-

tion price of their first-born, and the firstlings of all such of their flocks as were not suitable to offer to God in sacrifice. The corners and gleanings of their harvest fields and vineyards they were commanded to leave for the poor and the stranger. Lev. 19 : 9, 10. Common custom established one-sixtieth part of the crop, as the portion here divinely guaranteed to the poor and the stranger.

Their fruit-trees, during the first three years bearing, were considered uncircumcised. "The fourth year all the fruit thereof was accounted to be holy, and either the fruit itself, or an equivalent sum of money, was sent to Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord : so that they did not partake of the fruit themselves till the fifth year.

Every seventh year, the spontaneous productions of the whole land were set apart for the poor. Besides all this, there were their free-will offerings—their sin offerings—the half shekel of the sanctuary, &c., &c., amounting in all, doubtless, to full thirty per cent of their entire income.

Some may wonder how they could pay so

heavy a tax for religious purposes. Probably they did not live as extravagantly as we do in modern times ; nor is it of much consequence in their estimation now, whether they could afford to dress in such costly apparel, wear as much jewelry, reside in such splendid mansions or fill them with such expensive furniture.—The sumptuous living of some affluent professors of modern times, would present a striking contrast to the plain, cheap fare of Boaz, “a mighty man of wealth,” in olden time, whose refreshment on a certain occasion, when the amiable Ruth was invited to dine with him, consisted of *bread, parched corn, and vinegar.*”—Ruth 2 : 14. View this in connection with a fashionable party, not long since got up by a church member, at an expense of \$800, in one of our cities, where there are many pressing calls for charitable contributions. Even while this record is being made, the published reports of different benevolent societies in that same city, assure the public, that there are thousands bordering on a state of starvation.

When those ancient worthies honored the Lord with their substance, and with the first

fruits of all their increase, their barns were filled with plenty ; but when the claims which God held upon their worldly possessions were not responded to, he said, “ Ye are cursed with a curse : for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.” And by way of chastisement, he commanded the clouds to rain no rain upon them, or blight and mildew wasted the increase of the field. God himself says, “ I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city : one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not, withered.”—Amos 4 : 7.

Thus God, by his word and providence, taught the people anciently that he would have them respond to his gifts by a regular course of systemized beneficence.

This tithing system enjoined upon the Jewish Church, was admirably adapted to keep continually before their mind, the important fact that the fertile fields, the fruitful shower, and the genial sun, are all the Lord's.

2. The prevalent idea of *Stewardship* taught in the New Testament, is calculated to enforce

more impressively on the mind the Supreme ownership of God.

We are justly represented by the Lord Jesus Christ, as mere stewards, over that portion which the Master has committed to our care. Soon it will be said to each of us, "Give an account of thy *stewardship*, for thou mayest be no longer steward!" Then shall we realize, if never before, the truth of the inspired declaration, "It is required in *stewards* that a man be found faithful."—1 Cor. 4 : 2. Extensive land owners sometimes employ a steward to manage their concerns, collect their rents, keep their accounts, &c. Would he be judged a faithful steward, who would appropriate the whole of that income to his own private use, without consulting the wishes or wants of the master, or without keeping any record of debt and credit between himself and the owner?—Will the Lord of such a servant be likely to say to him when called to settlement, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" Nay, verily, but "the Lord of that servant will come, in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut

him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”

Any subject of Christ's earthly kingdom, who is not willing regularly to devote a specified portion to the Master, has cause to examine whether there be not lurking within, some of the disposition of those covetous and wicked servants who, when the Lord of the vineyard sent his well beloved Son to receive his portion of the fruit, with the expectation that they would reverence his Son, said, “This is the heir, come let us kill him, *that the inheritance may be ours.*” Probably you repel the thought. So did the very men to whom the Searcher of hearts addressed the parable. “And when they heard it, they said, God forbid !” How sanctimonious ! O, the deceitfulness of sin !—the treachery of the human heart !—who can know it !

Dear reader, permit me here to ask you to pause awhile, lay this volume aside, and take the book of God ; read with a prayerful spirit, on your knees, if you will, that touching parable of the Son of God, recorded by Luke 20 : 9–16. We will not give indulgence to the

thought that you are miscreants enough to stone his servants, or kill his Son, when the Master sends them for his portion : but we would suggest the thought for your prayerful consideration, whether you do, or do not, lay by you regularly any part for the Owner ? Whether you receive the messenger who comes for the Master's portion, with all that cheerfulness and promptness, which the good and faithful steward ought to exhibit ? Or whether you have in your heart coveted the inheritance for your own, appropriated all the avails to your own use as taste, or fashion, or habit may have dictated ; lived and acted as if it were your own. Let selfish and ungodly men, who will risk the consequences of disputing titles with God, claim the inheritance as their own, hoard up the avails for themselves, or scatter it with a prodigal hand, for selfish gratification ; but, my brethren, these things ought not so to be with the professed followers of the benevolent, self-denying Savior. Indeed, if you are genuine Christians, it is not, it cannot be so. Before you were ever received into Christ's kingdom, you admitted his claim to

you and yours : assenting cheerfully to the truth of the Divine declaration, “ Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price ;” and the claim of Him who bought you, covers your property, your faculties, your time, your life, *your all*. Before your conversion you were willing to adopt the language of the poet,

“ Take my soul and body’s powers :
Take my memory, mind, and will ;
All my goods and all my hours ;
All I know, and all I feel ;
All I think, or speak, or do ;
Take my heart, and make it new.”

Hence, the Christian has nothing to call his own ; he has made an unreserved surrender of his all to the God who made and redeemed him. He is now required to do whatsoever he does to the glory of God ! Every transaction of his future life, all his business matters, every expenditure and every investment : whether he pays out money for the support or education of his family, or imparts it for the cause of benevolence ; the ultimate design of promoting the glory of God, should henceforth be kept in view. “ *Whatsoever ye do, do all to*

the glory of God." Nothing short of this comes up to the Gospel requirement. Its fundamental precept is, "Son, give me thy heart." The beneficent Macedonians "*first gave their own selves to the Lord.*" Then with a soul bathed in the ocean of love and charity, gushing up from the fountain of the heart, we may find an important rule for the regulation of our beneficent funds recorded in 1 Cor. 16 : 1, 2. "*Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*"—

Were this scriptural precept heeded, as binding on us by apostolic authority, it would result in great advantage to ourselves, to the Church of God generally, and particularly to the objects of Christian beneficence ; a new and mighty impetus would be given to the work of evangelizing the world, and the glory of God would be greatly promoted.

Notwithstanding these advantages, which would inevitably arise from a prompt compli-

ance with this admonition ; it has been one of the most neglected portions of the book of God. I presume that Christians generally, if they think of this text at all, regard it as mere advice given to the Corinthians ; at a particular time, and for a particular reason.—*The time*—when there were beneficent funds to be raised. *The reason*—this was deemed the most judicious, efficient, and religious way to accomplish the object. It was God's prescribed plan. Consequently, the right plan, *the best plan*. Now, so long as such funds are to be raised by the Church, why not adopt the Divine plan of raising them ? But where is the authority for confining the application of this mandate to the Corinthians ? True, the epistle in which it is found was originally addressed to them, and it is equally true that it was addressed to the Church of God universally.—“ Unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, *with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*” The ten commandments, which contain the immutable law of God for all men, were original-

ly addressed to the Hebrews, based on the fact that God had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. We might as well neglect to keep the Sabbath day holy, on the ground that the command was given to the Jews, as to neglect this mandate, because it was addressed primarily to the Corinthians ! Surely, it is no more confined to the Corinthians than the declaration, that “Jesus is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.” Or, “Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.” Who hesitates to believe that he is bought with a price, simply because this saying is found in the epistle to the Corinthians ? But few precepts in the Bible are found with stronger voucher of general application, than the one under consideration. So far from being limited to the Church at Corinth, it appears to be a reiteration of a similar mandate, given previously to other Churches. “*As I have given order to the Churches [not Church] of Galatia, even so do ye.* Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store,” &c.

This rule, like all the general rules which

God has given to man, is susceptible of universal application, and is as well adapted to any other part of the world as to Corinth. It is flexible enough to meet the condition and circumstances of all classes, rich or poor ; and yet stringent enough for each. It bears evident marks of being the voice of God to man universally : consequently, obligatory upon all who are receiving temporal prosperity at the hand of God. It definitely requires a regular assessment to be made on our income, and laid by us in store, for the specific purposes of beneficence. It positively enjoins the duty of *Systematic Beneficence* upon “ all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . Let every one of you, upon the first day of the week, lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.” Therefore, every child of God ought to adopt, deliberately and prayerfully, this systemized plan of Christian beneficence, which the wisdom of God has devised and presented for his acceptance.

The more carefully we examine and analyze this Divine ordinance, the more we are impressed with its superior excellence.

1. Look at the *simplicity* of this plan!—We have here a condensed embodiment of the duty of Christian beneficence, comprised within the smallest possible compass; and yet simplified so as to be intelligible to a child. It lays down as the basis of our beneficence a simple principle, a matter of every day experience, “*as God hath prospered*” us through the week. Each one is directed to lay aside on the first day of the week, such a portion of that prosperity, as his sense of duty may dictate, for the sacred cause of beneficence. Sufficiently plain, and easy of application for any and all. Like the great system of salvation by faith, it is adapted to every capacity. An illustration of its practical working, is given by a pious shoemaker, who was asked, “how he could give so much for beneficent purposes.” “It is easily done,” said he, “by obeying Paul’s precept in 1 Cor. 16: 2. I earn one day with another about one dollar a day, and I can, without inconvenience to myself or family, lay by five cents of this sum for charitable purposes; the amount is thirty cents a week.—My wife takes in sewing, &c., and earns about

two dollars a week, and she lays by ten cents of that. My children each earn a shilling or two, and are glad to contribute their penny, so that '*we lay by us in store*' over forty cents per week. The amount is deposited every Sunday morning in a box kept for that purpose, and reserved for future use."

Were the money making ability of the whole Church thus exercised, and her beneficence thus scripturally systemized, who can estimate the amounts that would flow into the treasury of the Lord?

2. The command is *definite*. "*Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.*" Every one that "*calls on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,*" is definitely required to lay by him in store, on the first day of the week, in proportion as God hath prospered him, for the cause of beneficence—the rich and the poor, whether their prosperity be much or little. The poor are to share in the blessedness of giving, as well as the rich: and their gifts are as acceptable with God, and as highly appreciated. The praise which Paul bestows on

the Macedonian Churches for their liberality “*in their deep poverty*,” and the high encomium which Christ pronounced on the beneficence of the *poor widow*, who cast her two mites into the treasury of the Lord, settle forever the Divine regard to the gifts of the poor !

3. Observe the *flexibility* of this rule !— Though definite enough to meet any case, it is flexible enough to adapt itself to the condition of all men, whatever may be their circumstances, whether abounding in wealth or straitened in poverty. It does not require the poor man to tax his income to such a degree as to deprive himself or his family of the necessities of life. The rich man is not absolved by laying aside for the cause of beneficence the same percentage on his income, which his poor brother may have laid aside, to meet the calls of charity ; nor is he authorized to hoard or squander the remainder, as inclination, habit or fashion may dictate. The rule was as well adapted to the rich and luxurious Church of Corinth, as to the Church of Macedonia in deep poverty.

4. This ordinance is *efficient*.

While neglecting God's prescribed plan of

systemized beneficence, and following our own way, that is, laying nothing aside for the cause of God till the call is made, as there are multitudes who live up to the full amount of their income, they seldom have any thing to spare when the call is made, not having made up their bounty before-hand. If they should happen to have a little by them, there are several other matters which have a claim thereon, for which they have been making some calculations, and no arrangement is made before-hand for the cause of God. Thus it comes to pass that little or nothing is done by the mass of the people toward evangelizing the world. They can do so little at any one time, that they are ashamed or discouraged in their attempts to do any thing. Let them adopt this divinely ordained system, let every one lay aside a little each week, and soon he will discover that these little weekly deposits amount to a sum worth giving : especially when he remembers that his Heavenly Father only requires him to give "as he hath prospered him." He who has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, will not bind

intolerable burdens upon them ; nor yet exclude them from the privilege of being co-workers together with himself, in evangelizing the world. Thus, thousands who now do nothing, may be enlisted, heart and soul and purse, in the good cause of our God ; and great and refreshing would be the results. It is not the occasional waterspout, or tornado, that fertilizes and refreshes the earth, but the scattering, wide-spread, and successive rain-drops.

5. It is *equitable*.

“I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened ;” says the apostle, “but that there may be equality.”

If it be considered a burden, to meet the various demands of Christian beneficence, each one acting in accordance with this rule, helps to bear the burden in proportion as God hath prospered him. And if it be a blessed, heart-felt privilege, then each is to share in the blessedness of giving. “Let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.” Here is an equitable distribution of privilege and responsibility, attached to each and to all.

6. It is a rule of *proportion*.

“*As God hath prospered him.*” The man who is increasing in wealth is to give in proportion to his increasing ability. The proportion of income which might be full enough to give this year, in view of all the circumstances, may not be an acceptable offering to present to the Lord next year ! Hence, the numerous examples of devoted Christians, who, following the promptings of the good Spirit, give a larger per centage of their income, as that income increases. Several examples of this class of persons will be adduced in another part of this essay.

7. This inspired ordinance requires regularity in making our appropriations for the cause of God.

“Let each one of you, *upon the first day of the week*, lay by him in store,” &c. By setting apart a specified time to make these appropriations, there is an evident design to guard against that irregularity and indifference so very common among professing Christians, who have no specific time set apart to reckon with the Master and with themselves, and no arrangements made to lay by them in store, to meet the demands of beneficence. Experience

frequently assures us, that those things which we suppose may be done at any time, are often left undone.

The *time* here set apart by Divine authority when every one of us is to lay by in store, as God hath prospered us, deserves attention. "The first day of the week." The hallowed associations of this day, sacred to the memory of Jesus, are calculated to make a favorable impression on the mind, and induce us cheerfully to set apart a liberal portion for his cause. On this day we are forcibly reminded of what Jesus has done for us, and the debt of infinite gratitude we owe—the day on which he rose from the dead and became the first fruits of them that slept, thereby giving a pledge of our resurrection. On the holy Sabbath, while the mind is supposed to be, in some measure, free from the impress of the world, and the affections glowing with an ardent gratitude, constraining our hearts to sing,

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

On this holy day of rest, emblematical of the heavenly inheritance, we are to bring our tithes into the store-house, and see if our heavenly Father will not pour out a blessing, that there will not be room enough to receive. What a difference here between the teaching of God's word and the disposition of some *worldly minded professors*, who pretend to be so very devotional on the "first day of the week, that the taking up of a religious contribution *spoils their meeting*. Can it be possible that such persons have ever read this portion of the word of God? Or have they yet to learn that acts of beneficence constitute an essential part of "pure and undefiled religion before God?" The pious sailor, who heard a charity sermon and exclaimed, "Shipmate, will you pass round the hat?—I never get shouting happy till I have given;" had the more correct idea of scriptural piety.

8. This rule is *comprehensive*.

It is designed for, and adapted to, the circumstances of all men. The capitalist, with his thousands coming in annually, or the domestic employed in the kitchen—the merchant or his

clerk—the professional man or mechanic ; this rule is suited to each and all. Like other general rules, it is binding in its general principles, but subject to modification in its details.

All who receive their income weekly, may lay aside such a proportion of what they receive, as they may have purposed to devote to the Lord ; in view of all the claims which God and their families may have upon them. Or we may place on the record of our benevolent list, the weekly appropriation, which we design to consecrate for the cause of beneficence. Then the farmer, for instance, as he gathers in his harvest, or sells off his stock, may balance his accounts, as he finds out the prosperity of the year. Or the merchant can make his weekly appropriation for benevolent purposes, and when he takes his annual inventory, he can balance the account of his beneficence, as readily as any other account on his books. Or if his business be so extensive, or so complex, that he cannot ascertain annually, the exact amount of his prosperity, let him do as the Israelites were directed to do, make a final adjustment of the tithes once in three years. “At the

end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase.”—Deut. 14 : 28.

I apprehend that the practice of systematic beneficence, would have a tendency in some instances, to make men more correct and safe in the transaction of business. In Europe, the business men, who do not take an annual inventory, and present an exhibit of the state of their affairs, are not considered safe men with whom to do business. Perhaps the frequent neglect of this, may in part account for the numerous and surprising failures in business, which take place among us, in this country.

9. This rule is *preceptive*.

We do not regard it as a mere advisory regulation or prudential arrangement, which the Christian is at liberty capriciously to neglect or obey. Paul does not say, here, as he says touching another matter in this epistle, “I speak by permission, and not by commandment.” There is no such modifying expletive found in this connection. The duty is enforced with the same imperative mandate, as in the case of the Churches of Galatia. “*As I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even*

so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, *let every one of you lay by him in store,*" &c. The order is as really imperative, as any command to be found in the word of God : consequently binding on all men. If any are disposed to deny the authority of Jesus Christ and his apostles, we leave them to settle the matter with the Judge of all the earth ; but can you, my dear Christian friend, summon sufficient hardihood to set at naught their counsel, and still live in the neglect of a mandate so full of intrinsic excellence?

How surprising, that a Divine ordinance, expressed in such a definite and brief manner as to be apprehended without difficulty, easily remembered, and readily applied to practical use, should ever get into such general disuse among professed Christians, and be permitted to remain a dead letter on the statute book of God Almighty !

The only principle on which we can account for such general neglect, is *the love of money*, with its deceptive and chilling influence on the human heart. By yielding indulgence to this affection of our fallen nature, the heart becomes

encrusted with a covering as impenetrable as the *chilled steel*, of which the inner material of a patent door is composed, to guard the entrance to the vault, where the money is deposited, in banking establishments.

10. Before leaving this apostolic rule, there is one more view, which it may be well to take. The last clause has an interdictory aspect.—“That there be no gatherings when I come.”

If the inspired servant of God had been looking merely to the present emergency, he would doubtless have sent them word to postpone the collection, till he should come and portray the sufferings of the necessitous saints. Under the impulsive influence of his soul-stirring eloquence, a large collection might be expected.

But the apostle was not looking to that occasion merely. He had his eye on the wants of the whole Church of God, in every place, and in all circumstances.

He addresses the epistle, “Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,” and says, according to McNight’s

translation, "On the first day of every week, let each of you lay somewhat by itself, according as he may have prospered, putting it into the treasury, that when I come, there may be no collections."

One of the important designs of beneficence is the discipline of our own spiritual affections. God could readily provide food for the poor, as abundantly as the streams which flow to quench their thirst. He could cause manna to fall as spontaneously as the showers of rain ; and all the other objects of beneficence could have been as readily supplied. But where, then, would have been the opportunity to exercise and discipline our benevolent affections ?

The wisdom of this Gospel arrangement must be apparent to every considerate person ; as the laying aside of a small amount every week for the cause of benevolence, without any other motive than doing it unto the Lord, must exert a better influence on our own hearts, than giving larger sums at more distant intervals, under the pressure of eloquence or some pleading object of charity.

In concluding this chapter, let me ask the

Christian reader, is it not evident that God requires the consecration of some regular proportion of our income?

If the Divine claim is not apparent, is there not cause to examine whether “the God of this world hath blinded the mind?” If the duty of laying aside a portion of your income, “as God hath prospered you,” be evidently enjoined, then resolve, in the strength of Divine grace, before reading another chapter, to enter into a solemn covenant engagement with God, by adopting some such resolutions as the following:—

Whereas, the Creator evidently enjoins the duty of systematic beneficence in the Old and New Testament, I therefore Resolve,

1. That I will set aside some portion of my income regularly for benevolent purposes.

2. I will seek for information relative to the spiritual destitutions of the world, and the urgent claims of the Christian Church, in this age when so many wide doors of usefulness are opening, and will devote such a proportion of my property or income, toward the salvation of the heathen and mere nominal Christians,

as I shall impartially judge, that one of them, with my ability, should do in my behalf, under reversed circumstances.

3. My interests shall be more fully identified with the interests of my Redeemer. My time, talent, influence and wealth shall be held in subservience to His will who *bought me with a price*.

4. It shall be a leading motive in all my plans and toil, for the acquisition of wealth, that I may have to impart as his cause shall require.

5. In view of the oft repeated admonitions of God's word in relation to the dangerous tendency of a *worldly spirit*, I will endeavor to guard against this proclivity of my fallen nature, by the cultivation of my benevolent affections, and curbing this propensity.

6. Instead of being governed by the example of the mass of professors of the present day, who fall so far below the Bible standard in their benevolent contributions, I will endeavor to regulate my beneficence in accordance with the word of God, that my example may be suitable for others to follow.

7. I will endeavor to present myself “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is my reasonable service :” and “Holiness to the Lord shall be written” on all that I possess.

Do you cordially regard these resolutions as being in accordance with the requirements of God’s word ? Then haste to some retired spot, and on your knees before your Maker enter into an engagement to adopt them forthwith.

Remember the dangers of procrastination—the subtlety of the tempter—the treachery of the heart—the dangerous influence of *the love of money* ! Until you are willing fairly to meet, and fully to settle this matter between God and your soul, never attempt to mock your Creator by saying,

“ Here, Lord, I give myself away,
’Tis all that I can do.”

CHAPTER IV.

Examples of Systematic Beneficence,

WITH EVIDENT TOKENS OF DIVINE APPROVAL,
ADDUCED FROM THE PATRIARCHAL, MOSAIC
AND CHRISTIAN DISPENSATIONS.

In a preceding chapter we have seen that the beneficence of God is regulated by system. All who receive the Divine impress should aim to copy the Divine example. Hence we find that some of the most eminent servants of God, in every age, have endeavored to regulate their beneficence systematically.

Abraham, whom God denominates the “*Father of the Faithful*,” returning with the

spoils from a brilliant victory over Chedorlaomer and the confederate kings, gave a tenth part of all to Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God. Abraham realized that he owed the victory to God: and by the consecration of one-tenth of the spoils to him, he made an acknowledgment of his gratitude for the Divine aid extended unto him, in the day of his extremity. Abraham did not give the priest of God a tenth because he was needy. He was influenced by higher and better motives.—This Melchizedek was king of Salem, as well as priest of God, and probably richer than Abraham. He gave from principle, did it as unto the Lord, and was blessed in the deed.

Next to Abraham in the catalogue of these examples of systemized beneficence, we find his descendant *Jacob*, who, on the memorable night of his vision at Bethel, “Vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s

house : and of all that thou shalt give me, *I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*" Now let the Christian pause a moment to reflect on this example of *systematic beneficence* !

Here is a youth, driven from the paternal residence by the vindictive malice of an angry brother. As night comes on, the lonely wanderer, homeless and weary, lays himself down to rest ; the earth for his bed, a stone for his pillow, and the heavens for his covering ! In this solitude he ponders over his own duplicity, and full of contemplative, penitential, and prayerful emotion, he sinks into slumber, and dreams—he wakes in a happier frame of mind—the vision of the mystic ladder—the ascending and descending angels—and the glorious personage who speaks to him, fill his soul with divine sensations : and he exclaims, " Surely, the Lord is in this place !" and he vowed the above vow.

If it were no more than duty, for this youth, homeless and poor, to pledge one-tenth to the Lord, notwithstanding the pressing necessities which might arise, what is the duty of those who are surrounded with all the comforts of

life? If it were right for Jacob to consecrate to God one-tenth of what he might earn by daily toil, what proportion of income should they give who possess large amounts of inherited or acquired wealth?

If in those days, when the difficulty would be to spend large amounts of benevolent funds to advantage, Jacob gave one-tenth, how much of our income should be set apart, when there are so many pressing calls made upon our benevolence? If one-tenth was required of him under such circumstances, in his poverty and youth, how much does the Master require of rich and aged Christians, whose income *far exceeds every needful expenditure*?

Perhaps some worldly-wise man may think, Jacob was improvident, enthusiastic and unwise! One thing is certain, he secured the favor of God, and he imparted to him an abundance of the good things of this life, and the better things of the life which is to come!

See him returning home, with numerous herds and flocks; as he approaches the Jordan, he is overcome by a sense of God's loving kindness and says, "O God of my father Abra-

ham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee : I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant ; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." And what was yet more desirable, as a prince he had power with God and prevailed, when he wrestled with the Angel of the covenant, at which time his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. A special providence superintended his affairs down to old age, and on his dying couch he beautifully characterized his divine Benefactor, by the following expression, " The God which fed me all my life long unto this day !"

The twelve tribes of Israel devoted one-tenth of their entire income to the support of the Levites, who ministered to them in holy things ; and about two-tenths more toward other religious purposes. Here we have the example of a whole nation, nobly consecrating about thirty per cent. of their income to religious purposes.

Some of the wealthy among the Israelites gave much more than thirty per cent. of their income. When calls were made for larger amounts than the tithes would produce, their princely donations were made with a liberal hand.

In I. Chron. 22 : 14, we are told that David “prepared for the house of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold ; and a thousand talents of silver ; and of brass and iron without weight ; for it is in abundance.” Again, David says, “ Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and of silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house ; even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the house withal.” Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, the captains” and rulers “*offered willingly*” to the the amount in gold of “five thousand talents, and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents.”

These several amounts of gold and silver, according to the common computation of the talent of gold and silver, must amount to not less than *three thousand millions of dollars*.— And, so far from being given grudgingly, David said, “Of thine own have we given thee,” and “the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly.”

Nehemiah might be mentioned as another example of enlarged munificence. When he heard of the desolations of Zion, that “the city of his father’s sepulchres lay waste, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire,” his benevolent soul was deeply affected. He sought permission of the king of Babylon, under whom he was then holding a lucrative office, to return to his native city, that he might repair her ruins. To this work his money, his servants, and his time were devoted. “I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land : and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work. Moreover, there were at my table one hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us from the heathen that are about us. Now

that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep," &c.—Neh. 5 : 16–18.

Would that some of the affluent followers of Christ at the present day had the spirit of Nehemiah, to support one hundred and fifty missionaries while preaching Christ to the heathen. O, for an effusion of that spirit which moved Him "who was rich, for our sakes to become poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

If the men of wealth within the pale of the Christian Church were influenced by his spirit, how could they withhold the means of sending the missionary and the Bible to the millions of our race, who are now perishing for lack of knowledge? Can it be possible for a man to possess the spirit of Christ, and yet take pleasure in hoarding wealth, which he does not expect to need, when he hears a voice coming from the pit of despair, crying, "*send to my brethren to warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*"

How dwelleth the love of God in that man, who can look with stoical indifference upon six hundred millions of his fellow men, starving for

the bread of life ? If we believe in the existence of a God, to whom we are amenable—or in the immortality of the soul—or the unending joys of heaven—or the deathless agonies of the world of lost spirits, our belief should incite us to ceaseless activity and earnestness ; and induce us to impart the means requisite, to build up the cause of God and promote the salvation of men.

“ *Cyrus,*” the heathen monarch, under the impression that the religion of the Bible *might* be true, “ Made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem. Let the house be build-
ed, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid ; the height thereof three score cubits, and the breadth thereof three score cubits ; with three rows of great stones and a row of new timber, and *let the expenses be given out of the king’s house.* . . . Moreover, I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God : that of the king’s goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given to these men, that they be not hindered.”—Ezra 6 : 3–8.

Like the example of Abraham, this heathen monarch frequently consecrated to the service of the God of heaven *one-tenth* of *his spoils*, as we are told by Xenophon.

Is there not cause to fear that such heathens may rise up in the Judgment and condemn some of the rich and selfish Christians of modern times ?

The Primitive Christians, instead of departing from the elevated standard of beneficence erected by God for his ancient people, stood by it with a zeal rendered more intensive by the superior light of the Gospel dispensation. Having by their own experience tested the preciousness of Christianity, they were constrained not only to sell their possessions, and lay the money at the feet of the apostles, but were free to offer themselves, their services and life, if necessary, for the furtherance of this Gospel ! Were they accused of enthusiasm, this was their response, “ Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God : or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all,

that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."—II. Cor. 5 : 13–15.

Zaccheus, who was very rich, on the day that salvation came to his house, voluntarily consecrated *one-half of his goods* to the poor, and resolved, if he had taken any thing from any man falsely, to restore him four-fold.

Modern Christians in some instances are moved by the same heavenly principle. They love Christ and his cause, more than their money. Hence, for the advancement of his gospel, they regularly lay aside a definite proportion of their income.

Some, in view of the claims of their family, set aside for benevolent purposes *one-tenth* of their income. As examples of this class we can adduce such men as Rev. P. Doddridge, Dr. Hammond, Dr. Annesley ; and Lord Chief Justice Hale, England's distinguished and honored Jurist, practiced regularly on this principle. We might also mention a judge of our own nation.

Richard Baxter assures us that he long adhered to this principle, until for himself he

found it to be *too little*, and observes, that “devoting a given proportion of our income to God is a matter for which we have more than human direction.”

Rev. R. Treffry, Jr., practiced on this principle even when health failed, and holding a superannuated relation to the conference, “though he had a large and increasing family, with a scanty and precarious supply of means.” About a month before his death, having received a small sum of money, he enquired of his wife, “Have you tithed that money?” When she answered in the affirmative, he said, “That is right; continue to do so, and you will ever have the blessing of God upon you; but the very day you depart from this practice, your Providential supplies will fail!”—Treffry’s Remains, p. 266.

Another class of modern Christians have appropriated *twenty per cent.* of their income to benevolent purposes. This was the proportion settled upon by Dr. Watts, Mrs. Rogers, Arch Bishop Tillotson, and others, as the basis of their benevolent contributions.

Mrs. Bury consecrated *twenty-five per cent.*

of her income, and says, "I think it reasonable that such as have no children, should appropriate one-fourth part of their income to charitable purposes."

Others having a larger income or less expenses, or else in consequence of greater love for the cause of Christ, have systematically devoted *fifty per cent. of their income* to his cause. Of these may be named, the Hon. Robert Boyle, Rev. Mr. Brand, and Rev. Thomas Gouge. Of this last named minister, Bishop Tillotson says in his funeral sermon, "All things considered, there have not been, since the primitive times of Christianity, many among the sons of men, to whom the glorious character of the Son of God might better be applied, 'He went about doing good.'" In this list we may also place the name of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe, who says, "I consecrate half of my yearly income to charitable uses ; yea, all that I have, beyond a bare living, shall surely be the Lord's."

Others consecrate a specified ratio of income, fixed on a sliding scale, based on the fact that the larger the income, the greater proportion of it can be spared. The increase of capital is

another consideration with such persons, for the increase of their benefactions.

The well known case of the late Mr. N. R. Cobb, a member of the Baptist Church, in Boston, happily illustrates this species of systematic beneficence. At the age of twenty-three, he drew up and subscribed the following resolutions: "By the grace of God, I will never be worth more than \$50,000. By the grace of God, I will give one-fourth of the net profits of my business to charitable and religious uses. If I am ever worth \$20,000, I will give one-half of my net profits; and if ever I am worth \$30,000, I will give three-fourths; and the whole after \$50,000. So help me, God, or give to a more faithful steward, and set me aside. November, 1821. N. R. COBB."

He considered himself under as much obligation to devote his business talent to the glory of his Savior, as devolves on the minister of the Gospel to consecrate the talents entrusted to him for the same great end. Temporally and spiritually, God abundantly blessed him through life, and in the dying hour he was *triumphant*.

Though he died when only thirty-six years

of age, aided by his systematized plan of beneficence, he had given to the cause of God over \$40,000, besides having acquired the utmost limit of wealth which his resolutions allowed him to possess.

A member of the M. E. Church, now engaged extensively in the banking business, whose name we are not at liberty to give to the public, who formed a resolution somewhat similar to Mr. Cobb's, has attained the maximum of his intended wealth, and is now semi-annually dividing the whole profits of his business among the various charitable objects having a claim on his munificence.

Mr. E. S. F., who supports a colporteur in the Tract Society of the M. E. Church, says : " When I commenced in business, it was with the hope and intention of becoming rich. A year afterward, I became a Christian, and about the same time met with Mr. Cobb's resolutions, which I adopted. Some four or five years after, I read Normand Smith's Memoir, and also *Wesley's Sermon on the use of Money*, which led me to devote all my gains to benevolent uses, reserving for myself \$5,000. Up to this

time, I have, by the grace of God, given away about \$34,000 to benevolent objects."

A vital principle of systematic beneficence is developed in these resolutions, which demands special attention.

Fixing the maximum of intended wealth, before riches blind the mind, and making arrangements for the distribution of a given proportion of our income, previous to the reception of the funds.

The great importance of these principles must be apparent to all, who are apprized of the cautions in God's Word relating to the deceptive influence and danger of riches.

Some of my acquaintances have fixed upon a specific amount of wealth, beyond which they intend never to go. One is resolved, by the grace of God, never to be worth more than \$10,000. He now gives one-tenth of his income, and is resolved, should he arrive at that mark, then he will give away all over a bare living. Another has fixed his mark at \$20,000, gives to benevolent objects one-tenth, and is approaching the maximum, after which he designs to devote all his income to charitable

uses. Another says he fixed the amount of his intended wealth at \$5,000, has arrived at that point, and given away over \$30,000.

The prosperity of some of these men may be accounted for in part on common business principles. When it is known that a Christian man is doing business, and devoting a large proportion of his profits to charitable objects, he has the sympathies of a thousand Christian hearts, and their patronage too. And even wicked men will feel that it is more safe to do business with a man who gives such evidence of the genuineness of his Christianity, than with unprincipled dealers. Men of every class and profession may rely on the confidence and patronage of community, under similar circumstances. Besides this, the veracity of God is pledged for their success: "Give, and it *shall* be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth, shall be

watered and himself." "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." See how these promises are verified in the happy experience of those we read of, whose entire capital and income have been laid at the feet of the Great Proprietor of the universe. Thus Dr. Coke distributed two large fortunes. Near the close of life, he arose in the British Conference, and asked for the establishment of a mission in India. They said they had neither men nor means. "I have," said he, "a small estate left yet, of £1,000 ; I give that, and myself with it, to go to India ; don't refuse, or you will break my heart."

Howard, Wilson, Lady Huntingdon, and others of similar stamp, might be named. The venerable founder of Methodism was one of the clearest examples of this class which modern Christendom can present. From the commencement of his Christian career to the close of life, he distributed all his income over a bare living, among various objects of charity. When his income was only £30 per annum, he lived on £28, and gave away £2. When it arose to £60, he still lived upon £28, and

gave away £32. When it arose to £120, still limiting his expenses to the usual allowance, he gave away £92. From the proceeds of his publications and other sources of income, it is estimated that he gave, during his life, over \$150,000. Few, if any, have come nearer the example of rigid economy and self-denial set by our Savior while on earth. The British Accountant General, suspecting that he must have more wealth than was apparent, sent to him the following note, with a copy of the excise order for the return of plate :

“Rev. Sir : As the Commissioners cannot but think you have plate, for which you have hitherto neglected to make entry,” &c. &c.

To which Mr. Wesley makes the following characteristic reply : “Sir : I have two silver spoons at London and two at Bristol, and I shall not buy any more, while so many around me want bread.”

This system of retrenchment and liberality he continued to practice to the end of life. The last entry made on his financial docket reads : “For upwards of eighty-six years, I have kept my accounts exactly. I will not at-

tempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can, and give all I can, that is all I have.—John Wesley.”

Some of these are illustrious examples of Christian beneficence, and this is what the Church at the present time very much needs—living examples in our midst of generous and enlarged beneficence. Will the reader purpose to add another to the number of these examples, and put away all foolish diffidence, and “let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

That those Christians who are systematically beneficent should prosper in their soul—that their love to God and man should increase while regularly and practically exercising that affection, is in strict accordance with the laws of our being, and the genius of Christianity.

Of the primitive Christians, it is said, “They were of one heart and of one soul : neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own.” Their spirit of beneficence led them to sell houses and lands, and

lay the money at the feet of the apostles, that distribution might be made to all, as every man had need." To the worldling, it might seem as if such a course would lead to penury and want, but God's word says, "Neither was there any among them that lacked ;" and as to their spiritual prosperity, it is said, "Great grace was upon them all," and, "The Lord added unto the Church daily."

President Edwards says of beneficence : "There is no external duty by which persons will be so much in the way, not only of receiving temporal benefits, but also spiritual blessings." The records of the past confirm the truth of the theory. Where, in all the history of the Church of God, can the persons be found that enjoyed sweeter consolations, or richer communications of divine grace, than those mentioned as examples of systematic beneficence.

Such Christians have the promise of temporal prosperity also. I am aware that here we need to exercise the caution of the ancient navigators, passing the Sicilian Strait, with the whirlpool of Charibdis on one hand, and the

rocks of Scylla on the other. Avoiding fanatical and extravagant theories on one side, there is danger of running over on to a species of practical Atheism, which denies God any part or lot in the business transactions of men.

We are not to suppose that the adoption of the Divine rule of systematic beneficence will always secure wealth as the reward of obedience. Our heavenly Father has provided some better things for his children than those things that perish with the using, yet it is a fact, that those who give as God prospers them, frequently have reason to notice the special providence of God in their temporal affairs.

We will adduce some remarkable instances. Mr. Wilkes, a member of the Methodist connection in England, it is said, seeks divine direction in his business affairs, and *gives as God prospers him*, and he evidently recognizes the hand of God in his temporal concerns.

He is supposed to be making money faster, and giving more to philanthropic purposes than any other business man of the present day. Eight years ago, he was a journeyman mechanic. Having invented an improvement in the

machinery for manufacturing cotton, and wanting capital to avail himself of the advantages of his patent, he made it a matter of prayer, that he might be directed to some one able and willing to assist him. In a singular and unexpected manner, he fell in with an elderly Quaker, a perfect stranger, who accosted him with the enquiry, "Friend, I would like to know if a little money would be of any service to thee?" Having satisfied himself as to Mr. Wilkes' genius and honesty, the Quaker at once advanced him the required amount.

The praying mechanic started in business on his own account, and everything he does prospers. His missionary subscription for 1853 was seven guineas per day, about \$10,000 for the year. Another item of his beneficence for the same year was, 1,000 guineas to the fund which his brethren were raising for the liquidation of their denominational debt. His temporal prosperity increased very much, and his subscriptions were increased accordingly. At the missionary meeting held in his native town in 1854, the newspapers tell us that Mr. Wilkes promised, if God should spare his life through

the year, to give fifty guineas per day to the Missionary Society. About \$90,000 for the year. This looks some like the munificence of good old Nehemiah, supporting, himself, one hundred and fifty of those who were laboring for the Lord. This missionary subscription of Mr. Wilkes for 1854 would give to 150 missionaries \$600 each, for the year.

The saying of the poor people of Glasgow, in relation to the wealthy and benevolent *Dale*, might be applied to Mr. Wilkes without exaggeration : “ David Dale gives his money by sho’els full, and God Almighty sho’els it back again.”

In the humbler walks of life, I knew a young man, a few years ago, about to purchase a farm, chiefly on credit, and, lest he should fall into the common error, of withholding God’s portion, because he was in debt, before the bargain was ratified, he and his pious companion mutually agreed that one-tenth of his income should surely be the Lord’s. In autumn, he was not as successful as his neighbors in getting his wheat to market. While on his way thither, with his first load, an accident, trifling in itself,

occasioned delay. He returned home with his load. As he entered the house, feeling somewhat disappointed, I heard his good old mother say, "It is all for the best, trust in the Lord, my son." Circumstances seemed to conspire against selling the wheat till the next spring, when the famine in Ireland and other parts of Europe had raised the price of wheat in this country about one hundred per cent. Then he sold. The hand of Providence, in the affair, was too obvious to escape his notice. Such was his temporal prosperity, that within six years he was enabled to pay for the farm, and also another, much larger, by its side.

I have recently read of another munificent supporter of the benevolent institutions of the present day, who, with the companion of his youth, ere the marriage vow was sealed, entered into an arrangement to dedicate a specified portion of their income to the cause of God. He lived on a rented farm, but by economy, industry, and the blessing of God, he acquired a competency of the good things of this life. An aged and wealthy female, who had no heirs, died in the vicinity, and to his surprise, he

found himself, by her will, placed in the entire possession of all her real estate and personal property. Now, the annual portion placed in what he calls "the Lord's drawer," amounts to tens of thousands of dollars.

Query : Would it not be well for those who have entered the married state, without a mutual arrangement to devote a part of all their gains to the Lord ; to commemorate the next annual return of their nuptial day, by adopting the practice of systematic beneficence ?

I am personally acquainted with a minister of the Gospel, who nearly exhausted his funds in acquiring an education. For a while, his charitable contributions were without system. He gave, as people generally do, just as it might happen, and by close calculations, he made his income meet the current expenses of each year. In a consultation between himself and wife, they came to the conclusion to lay aside ten per cent. of his salary for benevolent purposes. From that very time, there seemed to be an improvement in their finances. Up to that time, he had never received his full allowance from the people for whom he labored, but from

that time onward his full claim was met. The succeeding year, even perquisites incidental to his office were doubled. Marriage fees, for instance : the smallest he received was more than the largest he received the year preceding, and both years were spent among the same people ; so that it was not a difference of custom among the people, which gave rise to this new state of things. Several times afterward, he seemed to be driven, by the force of circumstances, to make a purchase of real estate, and each time there seemed to be a fortunate rise of the property while in his hands.

Once, the only discoverable way for him to get a convenient residence for his family was, to purchase, as there was no parsonage on his new charge, and the stewards could not find a suitable house to rent. During the two years of his occupancy of that house, by the opening of an important railroad through the village, its value was much increased. Again, to save a debt, it seemed absolutely necessary to purchase a timber lot, and while in his possession, a railroad running near it, increased its value about one hundred per cent. A brother min-

ister one day inquired the cause of his temporal prosperity. He unhesitatingly avowed his belief that it was in consequence of devoting a specified portion of his income to the Lord. He was confirmed in the belief of such Scriptures as the following: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty."—Prov. 3: 9, 10.

"He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again."—Prov. 19: 17.

"He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."—2 Cor. 9: 6–8.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and

pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground," &c.—Mal. 3 : 10, 11.

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."—Prov. 11 : 24.

Reader, do you believe these Scriptures ? Perhaps an illustration taken from nature, which I read not long ago, may assist your faith.

"See that little fountain, yonder, in the distant mountain, sparkling like a diamond, in its healthful activity. It is hurrying on, to bear its tribute to the river. See, it passes a stagnant pool, and the pool hails it : 'Whither away, master streamlet ?' 'I am going to the river, to bear this cup of water God has given me.' 'Ah, you are very foolish for that—you'll need it before summer is over ; it has been a backward spring, and we shall have a hot summer to pay for it ; you will dry up then.' 'Well,' said the streamlet, 'if I am to die so

soon, I had better work while the day lasts. If I am likely to lose this treasure, from the heat, I had better do good with it while I have it.' So on it went, blessing and rejoicing in its course. The pool smiled complacently at its own superior foresight, and husbanded all its resources, letting not one drop steal away. Soon the midsummer heat came down, and it fell upon the little stream; but the trees crowded to the brink, and threw out their sheltering branches over it in the day of adversity, for it brought refreshment and life to them, and the sun peeped through the branches, and smiled upon its dimpled face, saying: 'It's not in my heart to harm you.' The birds sipped in the silver tide, and sung its praise; the flowers breathed their perfume upon its bosom; the beasts of the field loved to linger near its banks; the husbandman's eye always sparkled with joy, as he looked upon the line of verdant beauty that marked its course through the fields; so on it went, blessing and being blessed of all. And where was the prudent pool? Alas! in its inglorious inactivity, it grew sickly and pestilential. The beasts of the field put

their lips to it, but turned away without drinking ; the breeze stopped and kissed it by mistake, and shrunk away chilled. It caught the malaria, in the contact, and carried the ague through the region ; the inhabitants caught it, and had to move away ; and at last the very frogs cast their venom upon the pool, and deserted it, and Heaven, in mercy to man, smote it with a hotter breath, and dried it up.

“ But did not the little stream exhaust itself ? Oh, no ; God saw to that ; the stream emptied its full cup into the river, and the river bore it on to the sea, and the sea welcomed it, and the sun smiled upon the sea, and the sea sent up its incense to greet the sun, the clouds caught in their capacious bosom the incense from the sea, and the winds like waiting steeds, bore the clouds away to the mountains that gave the little fountain birth, and there they tipped the brimming cup. So God saw to it, that the little fountain, which gave so freely, never ran dry. And if God so blessed the fountain, will he not bless you, my friends, if ‘ as ye have freely received, ye also freely give ? ’ Be assured he will.”

His word is pledged : " Give, and it shall be given unto you." Nor let any indulge the thought, that they are *too poor to give*, and claim the promise. If such a thought is struggling for the ascendancy in the heart of some child of poverty, where little is given and but little required, to repel the thought, call to mind the divine approval of the widow's mite cast into the treasury of the Lord, or the history of the poor widow of Zarephath, recorded in I. Kings 17, who, in a time of severe famine, when the rains and the dews were withheld, was about to prepare the last handful of meal in the barrel for herself and son *to eat and die*, yet she is willing to share her morsel with the prophet Elijah. The result is familiar.

To encourage the heart of the poor, we also insert the following deeply interesting narrative :

" One who has nothing, can give nothing," said Mrs. Sayres, the Sexton's wife, as the ladies of the sewing society were busily engaged packing the contents of a large box, destined for a Western missionary.

" A person who has nothing to give, must

be poor indeed," said Mrs. L., as she deposited a pair of warm blankets in the already well-filled box.

Mrs. Sayres looked at the last named speaker with a glance which seemed to say, "You, who never have known self-denial, cannot feel for me," and remarked, "You surely think one can be too poor to give."

"I once thought so, but have learned from joyful experience, that no better investment can be made, even from the depths of poverty, than lending to the Lord."

Seeing the ladies listening attentively to the conversation, Mrs. L. continued, "Perhaps, as our work is finished, I can do no better than to give you my experience on the subject. It may be the means of showing you that God will reward the cheerful giver.

"During the first twenty-eight years of my life I was surrounded by wealth, and not until I had been married for nine years did I know a want which money could satisfy, or feel the necessity of exertion. Reverses came with fearful suddenness, and before I had recovered from the blow, I found myself the wife of a

very poor man, with five little children dependent upon our exertions.

“From that hour, I lost all thoughts of any thing but the care of my family. Late hours and hard work were my portion, and to my unskilled hands, it seemed at first a bitter lot. My husband strove anxiously to gain a subsistence, and barely succeeded. We changed our place of residence several times, in hopes of doing better, but without improvement.

“Every thing seemed against us. Our well-stocked wardrobe had become so exhausted that I felt justified in absenting myself from the house of God, with my children, for want of suitable apparel. While in this low condition, I went to church one evening, where my poverty-stricken appearance would escape notice, and took my seat near the door. An agent from the West preached, and begged contributions to the Home Missionary cause. His appeal brought tears to my eyes, and painfully reminded me of my past days of prosperity, when I could give from my abundance to all who called upon me. It never entered my mind that the appeal for assistance in any way

concerned me, with my poor children, banished from the house of God by poverty, while I could only venture out under the friendly protection of the darkness. I left the church more submissive to my lot, with a prayer in my heart that those whose consciences had been addressed might respond. I tried in vain to sleep that night. The words of the text, 'Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom,' seemed continually sounding in my ears. The eloquent entreaty of the speaker to all, however poor, to give a mite to the Lord, and receive the promised blessing, seemed addressed to me. I rose early the next morning, and looked over all my worldly goods in search of something worth bestowing, but in vain ; the promised blessing seemed beyond my reach.

"Hearing that the ladies of the Church had filled a box for the missionary's family, I made one more effort to spare something. All was poor and thread-bare ; what should I do ? At last I thought of my towels. I had six, of coarse brown linen, but little worn. They

seemed a scanty supply for a family of seven, and yet I took one from the number, and putting it in my pocket, hastened to the house where the box was kept, and quietly slipped it in.

“I returned home with a light heart, feeling that my Savior’s eye had seen my sacrifice, and would bless my effort to do right.

“From that day, success attended all my husband’s efforts in business. In a few months our means increased, so that we were able to attend church, and send our children to the Sabbath-school, and before ten years had passed, our former prosperity had returned four-fold. ‘Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over,’ had been given us.

“It may seem superstitious to you, my dear friends, but we date all our success in life to God’s blessing, following that humble gift of deep poverty.

“Wonder not that from that day I deem few too poor to give, and that I am a firm believer in God’s promise that he will repay with interest, even in this life, all we lend to him.”

Glances of deep interest, unmixed with envy, were cast from the windows at Mrs. L., as, af-

ter bidding the ladies adieu, she stepped into her luxurious carriage.

Her consistent benevolence had proved to all that in her prosperity she still retained the same Christian spirit which in her days of poverty had led to the bestowal of the *brown towel*.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Sayres, "if we all had such a self-denying spirit, we might fill another box at once. I'll never again think I am *too poor to give*."*

I believe that a minute examination of the history of every methodically benevolent Christian will show that his charitable contributions have been fully returned by increased prosperity. I have never known an exception. If all the people of God were to adopt the practice, many important advantages would accrue to themselves and to the cause of God generally.

To specify some of these advantages, will be our object in the next chapter.

* Extract from "The Independent."

CHAPTER V.

Advantages of Systematic Beneficence.

- SEC. 1. *It will discipline our Benevolent Affections.*
- SEC. 2. *Rectify our Motives in making Money.*
- SEC. 3. *Convince the World of the Reality of our Religion.*
- SEC. 4. *Prevent Contention with Mammon when conferring our Charities.*
- SEC. 5. *Ensure a more Judicious Distribution of our Philanthropic Funds.*
- SEC. 6. *Those having charge of the Funds of Benevolent Societies could act more understandingly in their appropriations.*
- SEC. 7. *This System would ensure a large increase of such Funds.*
- SEC. 8. *Save much Funds now expended on Agencies.*
- SEC. 9. *Furnish an Antidote for one of the first and most prevalent Sins of the Christian Church.*
- SEC. 10. *The Donors would enjoy more of the exquisite pleasure of giving.*
- SEC. 11. *It would give a new impulse to all our Christian graces.*
- SEC. 12. *It would increase our Treasure in Heaven.*

1. *The Discipline of our Benevolent Affections.*

Adopting the practice of systematic beneficence would do much toward cultivating that benevolent and God-like disposition which is absolutely requisite to form the character of a child of God.

In fallen man, there is a dangerous tendency toward the formation of selfish habits ; and in addition to this proclivity of our nature, the early impressions made on the mind in childhood, by the example and precept of parents who are solicitous to teach their offspring how to get rich : indoctrinating them with maxims and proverbs of worldly policy, rather than the teachings of Jesus Christ, who admonishes us so frequently and so emphatically of the danger of riches. He who knows the strength of our inclination, in this direction, has devised this regular, constant practice of systematic beneficence, as the best antidote to counteract the soul-destroying, God-dishonoring habit of selfishness.

The constant practice of tithing every species of increase among the Jews, and the rule of

beneficence, which enjoins upon the Christian Church the duty of laying aside, upon the first day of the week, some of the profits of every enterprise, or a portion of the wages of each week, is philosophically adapted to this design. It is well calculated to pierce the vitals and drain the life-blood of that gigantic and ungodly passion, which has been fitly styled "the root of all evil."

In addition to this advantage secured to ourselves, others, by our example, would be induced to adopt this practice, and every individual who can be moved to act under this rule, gives his influence to remedy one of the greatest imperfections of the Church.

2. The practice of systematic beneficence would help to rectify our motives in acquiring wealth.

The ever-present remembrance, that part of all our gains is for the Lord, would be a constant corrective for every evil or dishonest inclination in business matters. It would exert a sanctifying influence over all our secular transactions : in the counting-room, the store, the workshop, or the field ; teaching us to re-

alize the propriety of doing all that we do to the glory of God. What a revolution would be produced in the motives of business men, if they were impressed with the fact that in their secular affairs they were co-workers together with God. There would not be such a tendency then to backslide from God, in the hurry and press of business. How often is it observed, under present circumstances, that the man of business, instead of increasing in his love and zeal for God, when Providence smiles upon him, and causes his business to become prosperous and profitable, backslides in his religious enjoyment, and declines in his affections toward the bountiful Giver of all good.

This is not as it should be ; there is no necessity for such a state of things. Let our motives in business matters be rectified, and it will not be so. We may be diligent in business, and *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*.

Our religion, instead of becoming secularized by our business, should elevate and sanctify our worldly affairs.

3. *The world would be convinced of the reality of our religion.*

I think there is no other argument used more frequently or more successfully against Christians, than that founded on the alleged declaration that they are as much conformed to the world as other men ; that their worldly policy and their love of money—their motives in acquiring or spending it, do not differ from those of other moral men. Now let this law of Christian benevolence be universally obeyed by the Church of God—let it be seen that they are actuated by a desire to promote the glory of God in the acquisition and expenditure of money—that they as cheerfully consecrate a portion of their prosperity to God as they receive it at his hands, then will the world *take knowledge of them*, and admit that they have been with Jesus and learned of him.

4. *The adoption of the divine law of systematic beneficence would prevent all contention with Mammon, when conferring our charities.*

The individual who has no specified portion set apart to meet the calls of beneficence, who

leaves the amount to be determined by the impulse of the occasion, is frequently beset by Mammon, and a troublesome controversy ensues, whether he can afford anything, and how much. Or more frequently the question assumes the form, *How little* shall be given. The individual has made no definite calculations for the claims of beneficence ; *there is no bounty made up before-hand*. Now the adversary suggests, there is nothing on hand to spare ; and he sagaciously presents to the mind, a variety of other claims, &c. But few have sufficient presence of mind, at such a time, to end the controversy as a good old Christian did, when he came to the conclusion, after some little debate of this kind, that he could and would spare one dollar of what he had by him, to put into the collection. The adversary, to harass him for the act which he could not prevent, suggested, “you should have kept that dollar, to purchase a bonnet for Mary.” “Satan,” said the old veteran, “if you don’t let me alone, I’ll go and put into the collection all the change I have in my wallet.” This de-

cision, of course, for the time-being, ended the controversy.

Take another illustration. A young man in New York, by industry and economy, had laid up \$800. A meeting of the Church with which he was connected was called, to consult about building a new meeting-house. After some deliberation, they came to the conclusion to open a subscription then and there, to see what might be done. This young man signed \$100. When all had signed such amounts as they were disposed, the whole sum did not warrant a conclusion to commence the building. Several of the most beneficent of those who were present doubled their subscriptions, that a house might be built for the Lord. This youth also signed \$100 more. When he had pledged himself for this amount, Mammon suggested that it was *imprudent*, &c. On his way home, he continued to ponder over what he had done. The more he parleyed with the enemy, the worse he felt, until it really seemed to him a wicked act that he had committed. In the midst of this desponding conflict, he fortunate-

ly thought, "This is Satan's work," and the current of his feelings was checked. On a moment's calm reflection, he discovered clearly that it was the adversary. "Now old fellow," said the stripling, "if I hear one word more from you, I will go and sign \$100 more." The Tempter immediately forsook him and fled. Had he been ignorant of Satan's devices, or of the way to resist him successfully, he might have parleyed and repined until all the virtue of his generous act had been destroyed. I have known some who attributed their backsliding from God to such circumstances. But the young man to whom reference is here made, maintains his integrity in the Church of God, and has become an influential and successful merchant, in the city of Brooklyn.

Those who consecrate a definite proportion of their income to God, have no such conflicts with Satan. It would be sacriligious, in the estimation of the good man, to appropriate the Lord's portion to his own use ; therefore, as soon as the amount of income to be devoted is once settled, Mammon forsakes the arena of conflict.

5. *The adoption of this rule would ensure a more judicious distribution of our philanthropic funds.*

Those who have no systemized plan of beneficence are influenced and controlled, in their acts of liberality, more by sympathy and oratory, than by the exercise of sober judgment. Hence they give, not in proportion to the excellence of the object, but in accordance with the ability of the applicant to rouse their sympathies. An illustration of this fact presents itself. Not long ago, at a public gathering of Christian ministers and their people, an appeal was made to our sympathies for the temporal relief of a small family. The right chord was touched — a thrill went through the assembly, and \$120 in cash was paid down in a few minutes. In the same house, on the following evening, an address was delivered to a much larger audience, in behalf of the sublime cause of *missions — the evangelization and salvation of the heathen world*. But the speaker, though a great man, with a magnificent theme, did not happen to pull on the right string to move the sympathies of the audience. So they put

him off, with his six hundred million of heathen, starving for the bread of life, with the paltry sum of twenty-one dollars.

Those who are governed by the apostolic rule, making their weekly deposits for the cause of God, can act more judiciously, in most cases, with the *single inquiry* before the mind, how can I dispose of this money to the best advantage for the cause of my Redeemer?

6. Those who have charge of the appropriation of the funds of benevolent societies could act more judiciously, if they knew that the whole Church would regularly consecrate to these benevolent societies a specified proportion of their income.

As long as the majority of Christians are influenced by contingencies, and are subject to such spasmodic action in their beneficent appropriations, the officers of the Church, upon whom the responsibility of making the missionary and other appropriations devolves, must act in view of all this irregularity. With such an unsteady basis as this, on which to found their judgment, or rather, to make the responsible and hazardous guess, what a crushing weight

of responsibility and anxiety must these men of God feel, under such circumstances ! If the appropriations are made too small, they indirectly curtail the amount of the collections, and on the other hand, if they put the amount too high, they run the treasury of the Lord into debt and embarrassment.

7. Another important advantage to be derived from the general appropriation of a specified ratio of income to the cause of benevolence, there would be *a large increase in the philanthropic finances of the Church.*

There are some generous souls in the Church now, who are ready to assist in bearing every burden. But there are multitudes in the Church who do comparatively nothing. They need precept and *example* to prompt them to duty. Were the more liberal members of the Church to adopt this rule, though it might not require them to pay any more than they now pay, the influence of their example would have a good effect upon others. God in his word says, "I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened : but that there may be equality." "Upon the first day of the week, let

every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." The proportion of that prosperity, which we are to "lay by us in store," each one is to determine for himself.

The true Christian standard is for each individual to look upon himself as a steward of the Lord, and his wealth as having been put in his possession on trust, to be used as the Master shall direct. Some can give a larger per centage of their income than others, and God will require it of them ; every man according to his several ability.

We have seen that the Jewish Church, *beside the tenth* which they set apart for the support of the Levites, and the extra calls *for building the tabernacle and temples*, appropriated about *twenty per cent.* more of their income to other benevolent and religious purposes. If the followers of Christ, *aside from the support of their ministers, and the erection of churches*, would *every one of them lay by in store* for other religious purposes, but half that proportion of their income, great and glorious would be the result. Let us make a little calculation as to the amount of the philanthropic funds that

would flow spontaneously into the treasury of the Lord.

First, let us look at the probable income of the M. E. Church. The number of her membership, as reported in the Minutes for 1854, including the probationers and preachers, is 795,765. Many of this number have little or no income, though every child of God ought to be industriously employed. If they do not need the avails themselves, let them work for means to give away. God says, "Six days shalt thou labor," and indolence as evidently violates this command, as the reckless worldling who labors on the Sabbath violates the counterpart.

Let us suppose that of the whole number connected with the M. E. Church, there are 195,765 who have not the ability to do any more than lay aside one cent per week for the cause of God. And who of them are so poor, as to be unable to give that amount? During the year, the aggregate of these little mites would swell up to more than one hundred thousand dollars! Then suppose that one hundred thousand of the membership have an income of but \$50 per annum; and each give

one-tenth; this would amount to just \$500,000. Another hundred thousand of the members may be supposed to have an income of \$150 per annum each, and giving one-tenth of that, their annual offering would be \$1,500,000. Another hundred thousand have an income each of \$300. Their tenth would produce the sum of \$3,000,000. We may suppose that another hundred thousand of the membership have each an annual income of \$600. One-tenth of this would produce \$6,000,000. Suppose the next hundred thousand to have each an income of \$1200, the tenth which they present, would be \$12,000,000. And may we not safely calculate, that among the capitalists and professional men in the M. E. Church, there are one hundred thousand who have each an annual income of \$3,000? One-tenth of this would produce the munificent sum of \$24,000,000. Add these several amounts together, and you have an aggregate of \$47,100,000 as an annual offering from one branch of the Christian Church. These figures, contrasted with the present stinted beneficence of the Church, will doubtless produce in some a smile of incredulous astonishment.

To show how readily these things may be done, we have gone into this extended detail of estimate, and if any reader is inclined to stagger through unbelief, or to suppose that our estimate is too high, we ask him to suspend judgment till he takes into consideration some other important facts. We have not brought into this account the amount which would be paid by those of our congregations who are not connected with our Church. If the membership of the Church were to take this scriptural position, I doubt not but many of the congregation would take the same stand. We know that some of them do as much at present, for the benevolent enterprises of the Church, as some of our members do. My own observation for twenty years would lead to the conclusion that one-tenth of our benevolent funds is paid by the congregation, apart from the membership.

Again, our highest estimate of income is only \$3,000 per annum, when we know it to be a fact, that the income of some of the membership ranges from \$3,000 to \$10,000. And these might give much more than one-tenth, besides the support of the gospel at home.

Another consideration. In this estimate we have dropped down from the Jewish standard, whereas we ought to do much more than they did—our privileges are greater than theirs, and we have more work assigned to us. They were commissioned simply to preserve and perpetuate the ordinances of the old covenant among themselves, till the ushering in of the new covenant. We are commanded to “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” This, in connection with the touching appeal now made to the Christian Church, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich,” lays us under obligation to exercise a degree of munificent liberality far exceeding the measure of former times. To each of us the Savior says, “the field is the world,” “Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.” We are not *all* called upon, to go to heathen nations and preach the gospel, but *every one of us is required* “to give as God hath prospered us,” that those who are called

to preach to the heathen may go. "How can they preach except they be sent?" If the amount specified above, were given, the M. E. Church might appropriate to the cause of missions \$8,000,000, instead of \$260,000, the present amount of appropriation. For the American Bible Society, \$8,000,000, for the Tract Society of the M. E. Church, \$5,000,000, for the Sunday School Union of the M. E. Church, \$5,000,000. To support the worn out ministers, their widows and orphans, enough might be appropriated to pay off the full claim of all reported in the General Minutes of the thirty-nine Conferences for 1854, and pay them one hundred cents on the dollar, instead of putting off these needy and deserving claimants with a dividend of less than twenty cents on the dollar, as a reference to the *Minutes* just referred to, will show some of the Conferences to have done last year. When will the Church wake up to duty and wipe away such a reproach from her published documents? Notwithstanding all these large disbursements, there would be about *twenty millions* of dollars to distribute among other objects of Christian benevolence.

An intelligent minister, looking with surprise upon these figures, said to the writer, "You must surely have made a mistake in this figuring." He could scarcely believe that one-tenth of the income of the M. E. Church would produce such an amount. Yet large as this amount seems, I apprehend it does not come up to what Christians will do when the predictions of the ancient prophets respecting the munificent offerings of the Church are realized; when "the gold of Sheba" shall be brought as an offering to God; and "the kings of Tarshish, and of the Isles, shall bring presents; and the kings of Sheba shall offer gifts." The signs of the times indicate that the Church is making some advancement toward the prophetic period when princely and munificent offerings shall be made to the cause of our Redeemer.

A few years ago, the Rev. S. Roszell, of the Baltimore Conference, said in a letter to one of his friends, "he really believed the time would come when that Conference would afford \$1,000 per annum for the missionary cause." But now, the time has come, when a *single*

Church in that Conference pays that amount. We hope the time is not far distant when *individual* donations of that amount, will be given annually to the missionary and other evangelical societies. Let the affluent followers of the Savior, to whom he has given ability, put the inquiry to their own conscience, whether they ought not to set examples of this kind without farther procrastination.

A presiding elder, at his quarterly meeting, not long ago, avowed his belief "that there were *men and means enough in the Church*, to evangelize the world in twenty-five years." I hesitated for some time to give my assent to that proposition. But when we extend the the calculation just made in relation to the M. E. Church to each of the evangelical Churches, it makes his declaration look like unexaggerated fact.

The M. E. Church embraces only about one-half the Methodist connection in America, and all of the Methodists do not number more than one-third of the evangelical Christians in America. Carrying out the same pro-rata for all these, we have \$282,600,000. What a host

of Missionaries, Bibles, and Tracts, would this sum annually send into the territories of Paganism !

Let these calculations be extended *to all Christendom*, and we soon would have means enough to send a Bible to every destitute family on the globe, and a sufficient number of missionaries to every city, town, and hamlet in our fallen world. The entire dominions of heathenism would soon be placed in a state of siege ! What a mighty impulse would be given to the glorious work of evangelizing the world, should "all that call on the name of Jesus Christ" "lay by them in store on the first day of every week, as God hath prospered them."

The superior efficiency of this Divine plan of finance arises from a variety of advantageous circumstances. It leads out into the field the entire number of Christians, rich and poor, and keeps them all regularly at work, collecting the means to send pulsations of life and salvation through our lost world, each one feeling that he is appointed of God to levy and collect a tax, and also to act as one of the treasurers

and disbursers of the Lord of universal empire. Hence, each becomes a deeply interested officer of the Divine Government, ready and willing to bestow his services gratuitously and heartily as unto the Lord.

8. There is another important advantage of systematic beneficence. If adopted by the whole Church, there would be little need for *salaried agents* to traverse the country and stir up the Churches to acts of beneficence. Consequently, a large amount of money which is now expended for their support, might be appropriated to its more legitimate use, and the agents could be spared to carry the tidings of salvation to the heathen. Thus, while a large increase of funds would be poured into the treasury of the Lord, one of the heavy drafts now made upon that treasury, would seldom be called for. Every one of the members of Christ's Church, having laid by him in store as God hath prospered him, would simply need instruction, relative to the condition and wants of the world and of the Church ; and this instruction could be furnished by pastors, religious periodicals, corresponding secretaries,

and such other officers as might be necessary to have the oversight of such matters. If this Divinely prescribed plan were to obtain throughout the Christian Church, hundreds of men and millions of money might be spared for their more appropriate use. It saves the necessity of travelling agencies, by establishing a local agency in every heart. It enlists a thousand agents, who render their services gratuitously for every one it dismisses. "It gives to each conscience an agent's commission, a pulpit to occupy, a sermon to preach, and a collection to take every Sabbath."

Rev. E. Lawrence, in his Premium Essay says, "It is one of the evils resulting from the present unsystemized beneficence of the Church, that so much expenditure is necessary for the support of agents for collecting funds." We might add, it is another evil that many of these efficient agents are men who have been called to labor in another department of the Master's service. And another evil resulting from the present want of system is this. Men of ability not always being at command, it sometimes happens that inefficient men seeking situations, get into these agencies.

In the range of our own acquaintance there is a man who had served a people in the relation of a settled pastor for several years, but after much forbearance was dismissed on the ground of inefficiency. Several unsuccessful attempts having been made to obtain another pastorate, he finally succeeded, through the sympathy and interposition of wire-workers, to get an agency for one of the popular institutions of the Church, at a stipulated salary. The longer he labored for the society, the less funds there were in the treasury, for he did not collect so much as would pay his own stipend. If courtesy did not prevent, we might authenticate this statement by referring to the documents, specifying the institution, designating the field of his labor, and naming the man. This, we are free to admit, is an extreme case, but the most efficient agents necessarily make large drafts on the treasury, which they labor to replenish.

From the Annual Report of the American Bible Society, published in May, 1855, it appears that the salary and travelling expense of its agents for the year amounted to \$38,536,95. All the congregational collections are

only \$20,562,42. Add to this, the donations from auxiliary societies and from individuals, with the legacies, and it makes an aggregate of \$138,728,55. Much of this money, it will be remembered, is raised without the interposition of agents. All of it, and much more, might be raised for that worthy institution without salaried agents, if the stated ministry and membership would do their duty. How much better would this appear, than the appropriation of *more than all* the congregational collections to support agents !

Moreover, *these agencies* which the general lack of system has imposed on the Church as a necessary burden, do not accord with the apostolic rule of systematic beneficence.

“Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, *that there be no gatherings when I come.*”

What is meant by this last clause ? Are we not admonished here, to lay aside our free will offerings voluntarily and systematically, without the constraint of eloquent appeals from agents, doing it as unto the Lord ? If the in-

spired servant of God was not laying down principles to govern the Church in all ages and circumstances, but desiring to secure the best possible collection to meet the present necessity, he might have advised to put off the collection till he came and portrayed the destitution and suffering of those for whose benefit it was intended ; and with his descriptive powers, and pungent oratory, he could obtain a large collection, persuade them to pledge themselves to do more for that particular object than they might consider to be duty on sober reflection, especially if they had not been laying by them in store. Hence, many Christians, like Ananias, promise to God more than they perform. This leads to another advantage of systematic beneficence.

9. *It would furnish an antidote for one of the first and most prevalent sins of the Christian Church.*

I refer to the sin of Ananias ; promising, and keeping back part of the price, *lying to God*. If Christians would adopt the apostolic rule, and lay aside weekly as God prospers them, they would find enough in this sa-

cred treasury to meet all their pledges. The writer has been testing this by experience for several years, and in relation to this matter his purpose is fixed for life, and he can assure the reader, that he has no fears of being harassed by such violated pledges on his death bed, or having to meet unpaid subscriptions at the day of judgment.

The lamented *Olin* denominates the sin of which we speak, "One of the most prevalent and pernicious errors of the present day," and continues to say, "For myself, I am constrained to affirm that I believe there is among many professing Christians a criminal and growing disregard of their engagements to the various institutions and enterprises of religion and charity. Subscriptions to build a church or endow a college, are by many looked upon as acts that impose no obligation to pay."—*Olin's Sermons*, pps. 421, 422.

Again he says, "How a Christian who neglects these engagements, made under holy impressions, has courage to go to his prayers, to his sacraments, and above all, how he can go to his last reckoning, I am unable to conceive."

Then in the closing sentence of the book, that great and good man says, "For myself, I have resolved to look over my past life, and see if any unpaid subscriptions or unredeemed pledges are outstanding against me, with a full determination to pay to 'the uttermost farthing.' I dare not abide the final issue with this burden on my conscience, for I must meet it before a tribunal where nothing will stand the test but '*truth in the inward parts*.'" Here the volume ends. The acts of his life are finished. He has gone to that tribunal. Does he now regret that resolution? "Go thou and do likewise." The plan of systematic beneficence will enable thee fully to accomplish the purpose.

10. *The donors would enjoy the exquisite pleasure of giving.*

If the principles of systematic beneficence were generally adopted, the maxim of our Savior, which is so seldom realized in its fullness, would become an experimental verity. We should then learn by heart-felt and happy experience, that "*it is more blessed to give than to receive*"—a sentiment deserving to be con-

spicuously emblazoned in golden capitals for for the inspection of all the inhabitants of our world. Having our bounty made up beforehand, every deserving applicant would be received with cheerfulness, as all, presenting their various claims, would afford the better opportunity of judging where and how we might expend this sacred treasure to the best advantage, and also present more frequent opportunities of participating in the pleasure of giving, which partakes more of heavenly than of earthly joy, assimilating us to the Divine Being, who is ever giving and ever blessed. The worldly minded professor, who never lays by his bounty beforehand, for the cause of beneficence, and must be goaded to the task of giving by touching cases and striking eloquence, knows but little of *the blessedness of giving*. To such, those memorable words of the Lord Jesuſ, "how he said it is more blessed to give than to receive," are a paradox. Those who give in accordance with the divine plan, partake of the divine blessedness.

11. *If this rule were universally practiced by professing Christians, every department of*

the Church of God would receive a new impulse. "The desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose." There would be a spontaneous and abundant supply of financial means to meet every foreign and domestic call. An immediate and large accession might be made to every mission field. Bibles might be sent in abundance to every part of our benighted world—schools established, and printing presses put into active operation for the promulgation of evangelical truth everywhere—our own Christian graces would receive a new impulse—our faith in the Divine promises would be strengthened—our love to God and man increased—the Church and the world would undergo such a transformation as would make demons wail and angels rejoice—soon the joyful acclamation would be heard, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;" "Allelulia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

Christian friend, would you hasten the triumphs of the Gospel? Are you not assured that a mighty impulse would be given to the work of God, were the whole Church to adopt

this divinely prescribed plan? How is this to be done, otherwise than for *each one* to do his part? Will you resolve that your duty shall be done in this particular? Why hesitate? Are you not assured that it is right?—that it is duty?—that it is scriptural?—that it would redound to the glory of God and the salvation of souls? What if it should require some economy or self-denial to devote a specified proportion of your income to the Redeemer? What would that be, compared with what he has done for you? “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

12. *It would increase our treasure in heaven.*

This thought as far transcends every earthly consideration, as heaven is higher than the earth; or the infinite cycles of eternal years surpass the brief space allotted to man, for the possession and enjoyment of treasure upon the earth. The great Teacher says to his followers, whom he would most profitably and judiciously advise, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust

doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal : but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal :” and should we be fortunate enough to avoid these evils so prevalent in the world, stern necessity will soon compel us all to give a quit claim to our earthly inheritance.

But by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and sending the bread of life to the destitute, we may transfer our earthly inheritance to our everlasting home. “Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou *shalt have treasure in heaven.*” “He that hath pity upon the poor, *lendeth unto the Lord* ; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.” “Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”

The amount which we thus deposite in the treasury of heaven is an abiding and sure investment. Such treasure is under the special care of our covenant keeping God. Hence, the paradoxical expression of a dying man, we

may all soon adopt as our own, "What I gave away, I have kept ; and what I saved, I have lost."

Although we discard the idea of meriting heaven by our good works, yet the Scriptures assure us, that those beneficent Christians who freely impart their means for the support of the institutions of the Church at home, or to send the missionary and the Bible to heathen lands, or devote their time and talents to the cause of God, when "they rest from their labors *their works shall follow them.*" "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

"He which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." Go, then, like the far-seeing and prudent husbandman, who forgoing immediate returns, scatters the precious seed broadcast in the earth, and leaves it buried out of his sight during the long wintry months that intervene, in confident expectation of a coming and productive harvest. Now is our seed time. "The harvest is the end of the world."

CHAPTER VI.

Impediments to the Practice OF SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.

SEC. 1. *Lack of mature consideration.*

SEC. 2. *Stronger confidence in money than in God.*

SEC. 3. *Loving money more than God.*

SEC. 4. *A greater desire for display than for the spread of the Gospel.*

SEC. 5. *Pecuniary engagements.*

SEC. 6. *Treasuring up fortunes for children.*

SEC. 7. *The intention to leave legacies for benevolent purposes.*

1. *Lack of mature consideration.*

There are many benevolent men, who feel their interest to be identified with the cause of Christ, who are kept from adopting the divine plan of beneficence, simply because they do not give the subject due consideration. All who give this matter even a cursory review, will ad-

mit, without hesitancy, that the general adoption of this system would give a mighty impulse to the cause of God, and at the same time increase our own individual enjoyment. The only possible way to secure the general practice, is for each individual to adopt the plan ; and yet multitudes of Christians are prevented by some vague, undefined impression ; some false insinuation of Satan, such as keep back many, who have good desires, from giving their hearts to God, who freely admit that it would be the most advisable step they could take : or some such impression as deters believers from making an entire consecration of all their redeemed faculties to God, placing their all upon that “altar which sanctifieth the gift.”

In conversation with a benevolent old bachelor, who has just left my study, I inquired the reason why he, who had been giving liberally to the cause of God, never adopted this scriptural plan of systematic beneficence ? He frankly admitted that in his case, it was chargeable to a *want of due reflection*. In the closing up of our social conversation, as my

friend was adjusting his wig, about to take his departure, I asked rather a delicate question, why he had chosen to live in a *single state* all his life time. He replied, "I do not choose a *single state*, but some how or another, I have lived along from year to year, without ever coming to a definite conclusion to marry." Alas ! my friend knows not of how much pleasure and happiness he is depriving himself in each case, by a loose indecision and neglect to fall in with the Divine arrangements !

Some reader, perhaps, will say, "I do frequently think on the subject of giving a specified portion of my income to the Lord, but I have not resolved yet to do so, lest I should break my promise."

The steward will not promise to give any portion to the owner, lest he fail to perform ! Of whom do you receive power to get wealth ? Who gives you health, and strength, and the use of reason ? Has not God an undisputed claim on you and yours ? Are not the gold and the silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills the Lord's ? Which then is worse, to "rob God" or "lie to God ?" Both are bad, be not guilty of either !

In a social religious meeting, not long ago, a poor disconsolate backslider was asked, why she did not resolve to give her heart again to the Savior. To which she replied, "I do not think it best to make any promises, for fear of breaking them." If some other lover had said, "Give me thine heart," how impertinent a third person would have been considered, who should suggest, you had better not promise, nor vow at the bridal altar, lest you should prove inconstant and break your promises. Many sad and dangerous mistakes are made, by being too indolent to think deliberately, conclude wisely, and act promptly and perseveringly.

2. Another impediment which prevents many from becoming systematic in their beneficence, may be found in the fact that *they have more confidence in their money than they have in God.*

There is among some nominal Christians, a species of practical Atheism, which reposes more trust in almighty money than in Almighty God. There are some such persons, who seem to have no more confidence in the

God of Providence, than if there were no God in the universe. When they are admonished by the great Teacher to consider the fowls of the air, for which God provides, they learn no practical lesson from such a consideration. They have become too much accustomed to trust in their money! Their hearts are too much estranged from God to exercise confidence in him. Let them have some almighty dollars, and they can repose trust in such gods. But alas! painful experience often teaches them, how quickly such objects of trust may take to themselves wings and fly away! Their coffers, stored with glittering wealth, often present the temptation to the assassin to come and take their life and money too. Their hoarded wealth may be deposited in the bank, but the banks fail! It may be invested in real estate, or loaned on bond and mortgage, but a false title, an earthquake, convulsion, or a national war, has often deprived the worldling of his treasure. By the lightning's fires, or the hand of the incendiary, his costly mansions, or well-stored barns are consumed, and now he exclaims, "Ye have taken away my

gods, and what have I left ?” “Lo this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches.” Instead of “choosing God for his portion,” he relies on “gold as his hope, and says of the fine gold, thou art my confidence.” Instead of saying, “God is my refuge and strength, my high tower and fortress, a present help in time of trouble ;” “the rich man’s wealth is his strong city and high wall in his own conceit,” the day of calamity comes and he is overwhelmed.

3. Another impediment which prevents many from acting in accordance with the divine rule of Christian beneficence, may be discovered in the deplorable fact, that they *love money more than they love God*.

The God of the Bible is professedly the God of their creed, but the golden image is in verity the object of their warmest affection. To this they bow down as did the multitudes on the plains of Dura ; or, as the idolatrous Hebrews when they said of the golden calf, “This be thy God, O Israel !”

It is hopeful that the number is small of

those who have got into the ranks of the self-denying Redeemer, and yet love money more than they love their Savior ; and yet there is cause to fear, that there are too many such characters within the sacred enclosure of the Church militant ; persons who give little or nothing to the calls of benevolence, however much God prospers them. What an object for the Omniscient to look down from the throne of light to contemplate ! A cold, selfish, hypocritical, idolatrous worshiper of gold in the Church of Christ ! Soon he must give a *quit claim* of all he has on earth ; and his hoarded wealth, as the poor miserly soul gives to this one and the other a scanty pittance, will seem such a large amount to give away, that it is possible he may say as the miser who had partly made his will and then came to a solemn pause, and said, "I'll give away no more, I have given enough for nothing."

4. Another hindering cause which keeps many from adopting some systemized plan of generous beneficence, may be seen in the humiliating fact, that some of the followers of Christ have a *stronger desire for ostentatious*

display, than they have for the prosperity of their Master's cause.

When professing Christians pay out their money more freely, and in larger amounts for mere purposes of display, than they pay it for the promotion of the cause of their Redeemer, they give unmistakeable evidence of this fact. When men pay large amounts of money for jewelry, gaudy apparel, and a costly mansion twice or thrice as large as may be requisite for convenience or comfort ; then expend correspondingly large amounts for its furniture, and subject themselves to the perpetual tax which such a mansion with its fixings necessarily imposes ; and at the same time have but little to spare for the promotion of the cause of Christ ; these things witness against them. What response could they honestly make to the Savior, were he to press the question, "*Lovest thou me more than these ?*" If our money goes more freely for *these*, and in larger amounts than for his cause, is it not a convincing evidence that we love *these* more than we love *Jesus* ? Let those whom it may concern, impartially investigate these matters. Let them ponder on the

inquiry, whether the transient pomp of this world deserves to be set before the prosperity of Zion. Whether the honor that cometh from men or "the honor that cometh from God" is most desirable. Whether "the things which are *seen and temporal*, or the things that are *unseen and eternal*, should have the *pre-eminence*.

5. Many excuse themselves from complying with the scriptural plan of beneficence, and from doing much in any way for the cause of God, on account of being in *debt*. They must pay their debts before they give away anything! To such as are so deeply involved as possibly to become insolvent, we would say, pay your debts as fast and as far as you possibly can, for Christians becoming bankrupts always occasion "the way of truth to be evil spoken of." But there are some speculating, worldly minded professors, who are always doing a large business, always in debt, and always have a valid excuse in their own estimation for utterly neglecting the claims of God, and the mandate which he has caused to be placed on record pertaining to the subject

of systematic beneficence. They have an excuse ever at hand for not signing a subscription paper for benevolent objects. The applicant has to hear of all their embarrassments, and the doubtful condition of their affairs, &c. If such persons mean to be honest, we would advise them to give as full a statement of these matters to those upon whom they call to sign their bank papers, and lend them their credit in other respects. For want of such information, I have known many good and benevolent men to be ruined as to the things of this world. It may be well for some of those who make frequent use of this plausible excuse to parley off the claims of God, to inquire whether it is necessary, or whether it is right and honest in the sight of God, to take those steps by which they are ever deeply involved.

Suppose the steward of a rich man who is appointed to collect his rents, &c., should invest all the income in houses and lands for his own use, and run into debt; when the master sends for a portion of the income, the steward replies, I have not anything to spare at present, for I am in debt. Would

the master look upon that as a valid excuse, and say to such a one, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" "I trow not." O! how many of the stewards of our Lord thus parley off the Divine claims. "I am in debt and have nothing to spare." But if some important bargain were offered, they could readily produce the required payment, and run in debt again for the remainder.

Since projecting the outline of this chapter, the excuse of which we write has been presented, at different times and in a variety of shapes, while raising a sum of money to liquidate a debt which was found standing against the cause of God. Several who had signed a subscription long before, to meet this very demand, gravely say, they would like to pay their subscriptions, but they are in debt, and they must *pay their honest debts first!* As though a voluntary subscription, or written agreement to pay so much toward the erection of a church for the Lord, or to purchase a house for the minister to occupy, were not honest debts! All such persons would do well to read in the fifth chapter of Acts, the history of

Ananias and Sapphira, and learn from their tragic end *the consequences of lying to God*.

Another who ought to, but would not pledge any amount for this object said, "I should like to assist in paying this debt, but I am in debt myself." "When or how did you get in debt, my brother?" "I had to build a house last summer, on a vacant lot which I had in the village of —, and got some in debt." "Well," said the applicant, "I will lend you any amount of money you wish to invest in this matter till next year, by that time the rent of your different buildings will more than pay your debts." "Next summer I design to build a residence for myself, as my family residence is becoming old, &c., &c. I think I cannot do anything at present." Reader, have you ever made such excuses to be recorded, or to be met at the day of final adjudication?

How much better to make a systematic arrangement for the claims of God, and if the Christian must necessarily go into debt, let him arrange his payments in view of his income and expenditures, so that he can be *honest with God* and his fellow men; like the

young acquaintance of whom we told you in a preceding chapter, who before contracting a debt for the farm he was about to purchase, purposed to consecrate one-tenth of his income to the Lord.

6. *Collecting fortunes for children*, is another obstacle which prevents many from adopting the systematic plan of beneficence which God has enjoined.

They are so desirous to collect riches for their children, that they give as little to the cause of God, and as seldom as possible. There are two considerations upon which it may be well for such persons to bestow some prayerful thought.

1. *These fortunes often go into the possession of strangers.*

As illustrations taken from real life are generally more interesting and more impressive than mere theories, a few may be presented.

About a dozen years ago I met an aged, careworn old gentleman in a class-meeting; on the first Sabbath of my appointment to ——. As nearly all present were strangers to the new preacher, he proposed some pointed

inquiries in the class-meeting; to ascertain the spiritual condition of those present. A vivid recollection is still retained of the first response made by that careworn old man. "Once in a while I have a good streak come over me." Though some in the class-meeting smiled, you need not, for it was an unvarnished and truthful statement of his experience. For two years I lived a near neighbor to him, became intimately acquainted with him and his family, and can subscribe to the truthfulness of that experience. His children were now marrying, one after another, and the father was anxious to give them all a good start in life, so that the cares of the world were permitted to spring up and choke the good seed: consequently his religious experience, instead of flowing onward as the stream of *the river*, or *abounding as the waves* of the sea, was an *occasional good streak*.

Now take a brief sketch of the children and their fortunes, for which that aged father was renouncing his happiness in both worlds.

The oldest daughter married the son of a wealthy neighboring family, and the youthful

couple, having received their patrimony, set out to get rich. Mercantile operations, farming and lumbering, were all made tributary to their purpose, but soon the youthful bride was arrested by disease and died. The young man ere long married another wife ; but soon sickened and died himself. Of course the young widow could not be expected to manage such a concern alone, she must have a helpmate, and in a suitable time, a helpmate she obtained. The writer was called upon to fasten

“ The silken tie that binds two willing hearts,”

and now there are two strangers in the possession of that large farm, grist-mill, saw-mill, two stores, and a number of dwelling houses. A son of that old man married, got a farm for his patrimony, died and left it for his widow. A daughter, and yet another daughter married, and all four of these children are dead. Still the careworn old man lives on, full of worldly anxiety, with an “ *occasional good streak*” of religious feeling.

Let me give another illustration. Many years ago, an aspiring youth turned his face in

a westerly direction to seek his fortune ; and most fortunately for his temporal prosperity, settled on a large tract of land in the very Goshen of the far-famed Genesee. In the midst of this territory a thrifty village was located, which in process of time became the county seat. This man lived long, calculated wisely, and managed successfully in the acquisition of wealth, till his acres were numbered by thousands, and his dollars by hundreds of thousands. But few could hope to acquire such princely fortunes for their children. In 1842 I became personally acquainted with those of the family who were then occupying the homestead, consisting of the aged father, one son and one daughter. One son had married, the mother and two daughters then lay entombed in the house appointed for all living. Soon the aged and honored father had to go the way of all the earth. The children were now orphans ; but they were immensely rich.

The son married a lady of rare talents from an eastern city. But alas ! in a few short weeks he became insane. In this condition he lingered for awhile, and then died. And what

has become of the amiable Miss —, the household goddess? Among the many suitors that solicited her heart, her hand, and her purse, a foreign courtier was the successful competitor for this prize.

She was a prize indeed, morally, mentally, physically, and financially, highly esteemed by all who knew and appreciated her excellence. But alas! for all things human. In eighteen months from the time of her espousal, the sad and painful intelligence came back from a foreign shore, that she was dead. Thus it frequently happens that men weary themselves to heap up riches, not knowing who shall scatter them.

Another thought for those parents who are so occupied in acquiring fortunes for their children, that they cannot be induced by God or man, to adopt the scriptural plan of systematic beneficence. *It is generally believed by the most wise and observing men, that large fortunes are more injury than benefit to those who receive them!*

One of the most observing and judicious men of the past or present generation, lays it

down as a maxim, that "A great fortune bestowed upon a young man, is one of the greatest evils that can befall him, unless he make it one of his great objects to bestow a considerable portion of it to the good of society."

Numerous and melancholy facts are constantly occurring, to vindicate the truth of this maxim, and press it home on the attention of those whom it may concern ; but parents are slow to learn that it is ruinous to their offspring to bring them up in the anticipation of inheriting a fortune.

A very wealthy man, who had willed to one of his sons the principal part of a thrifty village bearing this son's name, was lamenting over the dissolute habits of that son, and being informed of the ruination of another young man who had a short time previously received a very large fortune, asked the writer, "How he could account for the fact, that so many children of rich parents lacked mental, moral, and physical energy, and frequently became bankrupts." The fact may be readily accounted for by every observer of men and things. A young man left in circumstances

which the vocabulary of the worldling denominates "*independent*," has little stimulus to prompt him to cultivate his physical or intellectual powers. Many of the most depraved passions of fallen nature are pampered ; time lies heavily on his hands, he wanders from one scene of folly and amusement to another, his vicious habits are strengthened, his faculties benumbed, and he soon becomes a fit subject to be operated upon by the saloon tender, the licentious, and the gambler. Swarms of these are on the alert for such cases, thoroughly practiced in the art of fleecing them. Temporal embarrassment begins to creep into their affairs, then carnal enjoyments are interrupted, irritability or despondency gets possession of their minds. Trace such characters onward a little farther, and you will probably find them disconsolate bankrupts.

A Church member, whose name and standing was known afar, not many years ago demised to each one of his children *sixty thousand dollars*. Within five years, one of those sons, who was reduced to circumstances requiring assistance, said to a friend who had ex-

tended to him some aid, "If father had not left me five dollars, and made me a business man, it would have been much better for me."

The testimony of a Post Master General of the United States is impressive touching the point under consideration. He says, "I remember the first time I visited Burlington, as Judge of the Supreme Court. I had left the place many years before, a poor boy. At the time I left, there were two families of special note for their standing and wealth. Each of them had a son about my own age. I was very poor, and these two boys were very rich. During the long years of hard toil which passed before my return, I had almost forgotten them—they had long ago forgotten me.

"Approaching the court house for the first time, in company with several gentlemen of the bench and of the bar, I noticed in the court yard a large pile of old furniture, about to be sold at vendue. The scenes of early boyhood with which I was now surrounded, prompted to ask whose it was. I was told it belonged to Mr. ——. I remember a family of that name, very wealthy—there was a son,

too, can it be —— ? I was told it was even so ; the son of one of the families alluded to. He had inherited more than I had ever earned, and spent it all ; and now his family were reduced to real want, and his very furniture was that day to be sold for debt. I went into the court-room suddenly, yet almost glad that I was born poor. I was soon absorbed in the business before me. One of the first cases called up was that of ——, *vs.* ——, a case that came up on appeal, but which, if we remember rightly, originated in a low drunken quarrel. Mr. ——, thought I, that is a familiar name. Can it be —— ? In short, I found that it was the son of the other wealthy family ! I was overwhelmed with astonishment and thanksgiving—astonishment at the change in our relative standings, and thanksgiving that I was not born to inherit wealth without toil. Indeed, *all my experience* has taught me, that those fathers provide best for their children who leave them with the highest education, the purest morals, and the least money.”*

*Extract from the Gambier Observer.

7. Others are prevented from practicing on the principle of systematic beneficence, by an intention to leave large legacies to the cause of God.

This, in some instances, may be well. "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way." Your heavenly Father designed that you should enjoy the pleasure of giving while you live. Perhaps your testamentary bequests are settled, your will made ; if so, proceed now and be your own executor. Is there a specified amount set apart for the American Bible Society ? Send the money to its officers forthwith, to furnish Bibles for the heathen abroad or the destitute at home, and possibly there may be in heaven before you, some of the fruits of your beneficence ! Souls that might have been rescued, enlightened and saved through the instrumentality of your missionary bequests, may have passed the boundaries of time and have entered the abodes of despair, before other executors disburse these funds for you.

Another thought : those who might be converted through the instrumentality of your

means, may be started on a career of usefulness immediately, and who can estimate the amount of good which they might accomplish before your death? All may be assured that the author of their being will hold them responsible for every dollar they ought to give, for every hour which they retain it in their possession longer than they should, and for all the good which might be accomplished thereby, either directly or remotely.

Again, if you act as your own administrator, you may be sure of having your will carried into effect; but if you leave it for others to do for you, the civil court may set your will aside, which we know it frequently has done in the case of other charitable bequests. A recent occurrence of this kind has taken place. A member of the M. E. Church, worth about thirty thousand dollars, bequeathed one-half to his family, and the remainder he willed to the cause of his Redeemer. But in consequence of some little informality, the civil court has broken up these testamentary bequests.

There may be instances where the testator is dependent for his living on the avails of the

money which he designs to give ; or it may be requisite for some business men to retain such funds in order to prosecute their business successfully. But we know of those who have made their wills, appropriating a portion to the cause of their Savior, who could spare that amount as well as to retain it in their possession till death. We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. O my friends, put this money of your Lord into the hands of the exchangers, send it round the world to do good, and souls immortal may greet you on your arrival to the heavenly mansions, having been saved from the second death through the instrumentality of your means. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Another important idea, suggested by the advice of a dying Christian, who was remarkably benevolent while living, and at his death bequeathed \$30,000 to benevolent purposes. To a Christian brother he said, "Do good with your substance while living, and as you have opportunity ; otherwise when you come to die

you will be at a loss to know what distribution it is best you should make of it. The trouble and care of such a distribution *in a dying hour, should be avoided by every Christian* ; by disposing of his property while in life and health, as the Lord should prosper him, and present opportunities of doing good." Is it not a matter of surprise that such sound advice as this, coming from the lips of dying men, who have learned by experience, should be disregarded ?

But what shall be said to those wealthy professing Christians who will not give as God prospers them in life, and even in the dying hour, when settling their worldly affairs, and making preparation for the bar of God, neglect to make any appropriation to the rightful owner of the gold and the silver, while conveying to children or other relatives, tens of thousands ? What account can such persons give of their stewardship ? Will the Master approvingly say to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant ?" Is it possible that such persons can have any scriptural idea of their obligation to honor the Lord with their sub-

stance? Have they ever deliberately thought of the warnings and admonitions recorded in the book of God, pertaining to the guilt and danger of being rich? Do they realize the import of such scriptures as the following, "He that maketh haste to be rich, *shall not be innocent!*" In such *haste* to be rich that no arrangement is made for the portion which God claims. He robs God—robs his poor—robs his Church of the portion which the master claims for them. "*He shall not be innocent.*"

"They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." The inspired man of God does not say they that will be rich by *dishonesty* or by *oppressing* the *poor*, or extorting from their neighbor, but simply they that *will be rich*, however honestly they may have obtained their riches. What other charge is alledged by the great Teacher against the man who lifts up his eyes in torment, but the simple fact of being *rich*? What else can you discover in the account given of him by our Savior, was there to *drown him in destruction and perdition*?

Have you ever read of any in olden time who came to the bountiful Giver of all good, that were sent away empty? In Luke 1: 53, you may read this remarkable expression, "The rich he hath sent empty away." Have you ever heard of any one who came to the good Master in the days of his flesh, sincerely inquiring what good thing he might do to inherit eternal life, that was permitted to go away *sorrowful*? Do you not remember the young man who *had great possessions*? It may be well to hear what was said after he went away sorrowful. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, verily I say unto you, that a *rich man* shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

The simple fact of hoarding up a large amount of riches, constitutes guilt in the sight of God in every age, but emphatically so in the present condition of the world and of the Church, when there are so many opportunities of doing good, and such pressing necessity for help.

If these things be true, well might the great Teacher say, "Wo unto you that are rich." It is high time that such neglected portions of the word of God were uttered with an emphasis, that would pierce the heart of worldly minded professors, arouse their slumbering conscience, and startle them out of the fearful swoon of moral death into which they have fallen, ere they be cast, with other *idolators*, "into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone : which is the second death."

The possibility of possessing wealth, and at the same time enjoying the favor of God, is admitted. Men have thus lived, and doubtless such men now live. Jacob acquired large possessions ; and yet as a prince he had power with God. In the strength of omnipotent faith, he could take hold of the angel of the covenant and say, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." But remember that in his *youth* he vowed unto God and said, "Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Job so far outstripped all his cotemporaries in the acquisition of wealth, that "he was the greatest of all the men of

the east ;” and it is evident that his immense wealth left no stain on his illustrious character, nor did his gold and silver become a metallic coffin, in which to bury his sympathetic and benevolent affections. “He rose early in the morning to offer burnt offerings” and “costly sacrifices unto the Lord”—“he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy”—“was a father to the poor,” “and the blessing of those that were ready to perish came upon him.” The riches of Solomon were great, and his liberality in building a temple for the Most High God was correspondingly munificent. When Zaccheus, the rich publican, said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to feed the poor ; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold :” Jesus immediately responded and said to him, “This day is salvation come to this house.” In the practice of such liberality, rich men have enjoyed the favor of God upon earth, and doubtless have been admitted to mansions in heaven.

CHAPTER VII.

The Duty of Pastors.

SEC. 1. *To set the Example of Systematic Beneficence.*

SEC. 2. *To teach the Duty to others.*

1. *To set the Example of Systematic Beneficence.*

The subject of this chapter I regard as being of more importance to the cause of systematic beneficence, than any other in the essay. Yet, such is its nature, and such the relation which the writer bears to the subject, that he fears he will not do it the justice it deserves. It is a delicate point for a pastor to speak of the duty or neglects of his brethren and fathers in the ministry.

Who has yet ventured to speak out plainly

on this subject, and press upon the conscience of the ministry, the claims which God holds against them relating to the subject of systematic beneficence, — as generally neglected by them, I apprehend, as by the laity? In this respect, the words of Hosea, “Like people, like priest,” holds true in relation to us, and it may be well for us to note what immediately follows, “And I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their doings.”—Hosea 4 : 9.

That the great majority of the priests and of the people are neglecting the teaching of inspiration touching this duty, is too true to be contradicted. Of what avail is it to write essays to the people pertaining to this neglected Christian duty, while an overwhelming majority of the pastors cast the influence of their example on the other side, especially when the essayist is trying to counteract such a fondly cherished habit as that of selfishness?

My brethren, let us listen to the word of the Lord, specifically directed to the sons of Levi, pertaining to this duty. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of

the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up a heave offering of it for the Lord, even a *tenth part* of the tithe. And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor, and as the fullness of the wine-press. Thus *ye* also shall offer a heave offering unto the Lord of all *your tithes*, which ye receive of the children of Israel." Is not the instruction here given to the Levites as definite as the instruction that was given to the Jewish people? Now, my brother, if the tempter should step in at this point, and whisper in your ear "that it was designed specifically for the Levitical priesthood, which has passed away, with the other Jewish rites and ceremonies, &c., &c., for it would be just like Satan to commence citing scripture and talking theology here; remember how he quoted scripture when trying his subtle wiles upon the High Priest of our profession, and it may be well for us to meet him as our Master did, with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Tell him that it is written in the new dispensation, to

“all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, . . . Let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him,” &c. If he should insinuate that this was designed for *all the people*, let him know that the *priests* “call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,” as well as the people. Again, we may tell him it is written to the Christian ministry expressly, “Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in *charity*, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Here we see, that whatever duties God requires of his people, either pertaining to purity of life, godliness of conversation, or acts of *charity*, to the ministry he says, “Be thou an example of the believers.”

In relation to this duty of the ministry we are not left to inferences : we have here explicit direction, which none who deserve a place in the sacred ranks will try to evade or resist.

Possibly some may feel inclined to excuse themselves from obedience to this duty, on the ground of small salaries. They feel that they cannot afford to do very much and do justice to their families, &c. Surely there is no re-

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quirement of God, nor any law of beneficence, which asks us to do any injustice to our families. Where little is given, little is required. Certainly the God whom we serve does not ask anything inconsistent at our hand. The law of systematic beneficence simply requires us, "Upon the first day of the week," to lay aside for the cause of God such a proportion of the prosperity of the preceding week as our sense of duty may dictate ; and it would seem as if nothing but a total suspension of the Divine prosperity could abrogate this claim.

But you do not desire to have this Divine claim upon you or yours revoked ; you give, and intend to continue giving, as long as God continues to prosper you, and doubtless you give liberally ; the inquiry which we would press upon your attention is this. Do you give scripturally, regularly, systematically, as "an example of the believers?" It is well known that many members of the militant Church, give but little if anything toward helping forward the philanthropic enterprises of the day ; and this neglect may in part be charged to the ministry, as we have not taught the people,

either by precept or example, that there is a universal law of systematic benevolence, issued by Divine authority, and binding on all who are receiving temporal blessings from the hands of God.

We require of those who unite with the Church, attention to various ordinances of religion. The propriety of such a requisition is generally acknowledged and complied with. Yet we should find it difficult to point out any one of these ordinances that is more specifically enjoined, or more positively required, in either the old or the new dispensation, than the practice of systematic beneficence.

2. We therefore regard it as a duty binding on the ministry, to instruct their people in relation to this neglected subject. Is it not to be feared that the neglect of the ministry to set the example and teach the doctrine of systematic beneficence, is one of the principal reasons to be assigned for the general neglect of this duty among the people? I know not of a solitary feature of ministerial duty, wherein there is such general and culpable neglect. Though I have steadily attended the house of

God since first led there in childhood by the hand of a praying mother, I do not know that I ever heard a sermon on this subject. The text in I Cor. 16 : 1, 2, in which this duty is laid down so plainly and specifically, the writer has never yet heard used as a text, excepting a feeble attempt of his own. Partly through curiosity, and partly to show this general neglect of the ministry, I examined my library, which contains the sermons of many of the leading ministers of the various evangelical denominations of Europe and America ; thirty-six volumes of sermons, lectures and outlines, amounting in all to two thousand six hundred and seventy-six ; and not one of them presents even an outline on this text.

The day these lines were penned, having had an opportunity, I inquired of a minister of the Gospel whose range of acquaintance is very extensive through the United States, the British Provinces, and in the Old World too, if he ever heard a sermon on the subject of systematic beneficence ? His answer was, "*Not one !*" The same question has been proposed to several ministers of different denomi-

nations, and a similar answer received in every instance.

This subject seems to be as much neglected by the ministry in our day, as a kindred topic was in the days of Wesley. In the introduction to his sermon "on the danger of riches," having adduced the doctrine of his text, he asks, "Who preaches this? Great is the company of the preachers at this day, regular and irregular, but I do not remember that in three score years I have heard one sermon preached upon this subject."

We need not be at all surprised that the mass of the people neglect those Bible truths upon which the ministry neglect to preach.

A prosperous merchant says, "I have practiced myself on this principle for many years, and have some faith to believe that the *spreading before the people* the great principles of systematic giving, is to be a mighty instrument, in the hands of God, for the conversion of the world." If these principles are spread before the people, the ministry must do it. The essayist may write, and scores of essays may be published, yet thousands of the people will

never read them. There is fearful responsibility resting on the minister. "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel ; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." For the purpose of counteracting the malignant affection of covetousness, and producing a spirit of liberality in the Churches, Dr. Dick recommends as the first means to be employed, "*Frequent preaching on the subject,*" and goes on to say, "There is, perhaps, no mode by which so powerful an impression may be made, on any subject, on the minds of Christians in general, as by the *viva voce* discourses of a respected, eloquent, and enlightened preacher, especially if his discussions be enlivened by vivid representations of sensible objects and appeals to striking facts connected with his subject. Such appeals can scarcely be altogether resisted by persons impressed with religious principle ; and it is to be regretted that Christians have not more frequently, in this way, been stirred up to a performance of their duty. Nor ought it to be considered as deviating from *the preaching of the*

Gospel, when such subjects are introduced into the pulpit. For they are intimately connected with the progress of Divine truth ; and the Gospel can never extensively take effect, nor its principles be fully acted upon in Christian society, till such subjects be pointedly and publicly brought forward, and undergo the most serious and solemn consideration. But it requires to be carefully attended to, that no preacher come forward publicly to denounce covetousness, and to attempt to stir up Christians to liberality, who is himself known or *suspected* to be under the influence of a worldly or avaricious disposition. The most vivid representations, and the most pathetic appeals of such a preacher, would rebound from the hearts of his audience like an arrow from a wall of marble. For how can a man who seldom gives in proportion to his ability to any philanthropic object, expect, by the most splendid oration, to produce a deep moral impression upon his hearers ? For example, in this as well as every other case, would have a more powerful effect than precept.

A few months ago I was conversing with a

friend on this subject, who mentioned several honorable examples of liberality ; some of whom, though occupying only a medium station in life, contributed to the amount of \$80 to \$100, so that the whole congregation raised from \$2,000 to \$2,500 annually, for missionary and other purposes, besides the regular maintenance of the gospel among themselves. His minister, he said, maintained the principle that every Christian should, at least, devote one-tenth of his income for religious purposes. I asked him the amount of his minister's stipend, and was informed that it was about \$2,000 per annum. I then inquired if his minister set an example to his hearers, by acting in accordance with his own principle, and if it was a fact that he devoted \$200 per annum to religious and philanthropic objects ? The reply was, "I am sure he does not." What amount then does he contribute for such purposes ? "About \$40 to \$50 annually, at the most." "If this be the case," I replied, "I should scarcely have had the effrontery to inculcate such a principle upon others ;" and I was given to understand that in this

case, the discrepancy between his conduct and the principle admitted, was beginning to be particularly marked.

- Why should ministers, especially such as have a good income, consider themselves as exceptions to a general rule? If they do not set an example of liberality in their conduct, all their instructions on this point will go for nothing, and be only as “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”

Here I apprehend may be discovered the reason why there are so few in the ministry who speak out on this subject. They are generally men of too much consistency, to enjoin upon others a practice which they neglect themselves.

Let me not be understood here, to intimate an opinion that ministers are behind others in acts of liberality. I do not think so. The ministry, as a body, I believe to be the most beneficent set of men, according to their ability, which the world can produce. But their liberality, like that of the great body of Christians, is too irregular—too spasmodical; governed not by system, but by accident; the

casual coming of some agent, hinged on the contingency of his stirring eloquence. How few there are, even among ministers, who have systemized and adjusted the claims of beneficence, definitely appropriating a specified proportion of their income to the Lord?

I had indulged a hope that there might be a goodly number of these sons of Levi, who acted in accordance with the scriptural plan of beneficence, though unknown to me, till a statement appeared in the *National Magazine*, affirming that “scarcely any man can enumerate twenty-five systematic, benevolent Christians, among all his acquaintance. “This assertion, coming deliberately from one who, for years has occupied prominent posts of observation, has driven the writer to the unwelcome conclusion that the number of Christians who are systematic in their benevolence, must be less than he had imagined.

That our inattention, as ministers, to this subject, is one of the chief reasons to be assigned for the general neglect of this duty, there can be but little doubt.

The President of one of our Universities,

not long since, was relating a pleasing incident which occurred under his observation, in relation to a judge who had adopted this practice. The President called on him for a donation to the University. The Judge cheerfully replied, "I will look at the list of my beneficent funds and disbursements, and see what amount I have on hand to give." "It pleased me very much," said the President, "to learn that he was systematic in his beneficence." This inquiry was then proposed to the observing doctor of divinity. "Why is it that there are so very few who adopt this practice?" To which he replied, unhesitatingly, "The want of instruction. *Our preachers do not publicly enforce the duty!*"

O that the sons of Levi might arise, in the strength of Israel's God, and be resolved, one and all, to enforce this duty, both by precept and example! Does the sacred oracle say, "*To all that in every place, call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him,*" &c.? What Biblical expositor will hazard the opinion that the ministry are

not here included with the laity? Does God say, “Be *thou* an example of the believers, in conversation, in *charity*?” Is not this specifically and solely to the Christian minister? Surely, every body of ministers—every Methodist Conference—every Presbyterian Synod—every Episcopal or Baptist Convention, should present the example to the whole Church, of a company of Christian ministers, who conscientiously and scripturally devote a systemized proportion of their temporal prosperity to the Lord. If the Church should be the light of the world, ought not ministers to be the light of the Church? “It depends upon us, mainly, under God,” said a distinguished minister to his brethren, in relation to this subject, “whether the blessing shall ooze and trickle upon the world in scanty drops, or whether it shall flow in mighty streams. We are icebergs to the cause, or central fires in the midst of our population.” Most cordially do we endorse this statement. We doubt not but every Church would deeply feel, and practically acknowledge the influence of a generous liberality, on the part of its minister. It is true that the faith-

ful pastor devotes his time, talents and life to the cause of God ; and some of them, to engage in this service, have relinquished lucrative situations, now, perhaps, obtaining a bare living. Yet I apprehend that we are under obligation to exhibit our sympathy with this *great reform*, to which the Churches are waking up, although we may have to exercise frugality or self-denial, trusting in those doctrines of special providence which Jesus taught his disciples — which we preach to our people.

Let us, then, solemnly pledge ourselves to the God whom we serve, to do our whole duty, in relation to this matter ; enforcing it upon others by example and precept. We will not be likely to speak frequently or energetically on this matter, until we have commenced the practice ourselves ; and if we should summon ourselves to the task, our admonitions would fall comparatively powerless on the ears of the people. Example is always more impressive than precept.

It may require a degree of moral intrepidity, at times, to carry out this purpose. You may find members of the Church or congregation

very sensitive, when direct appeals are made touching this duty. To some, this kind of preaching may be insipid, to others repulsive, and these will be as likely to be among the rich and influential as otherwise. Under their influence, you may shrink from duty, unless nerved with some of the moral intrepidity which enabled the great apostle of the Gentiles to say, amidst greater trials, "None of these things move me." Perhaps you may have to brace up against notions of delicacy, which may arise in the mind, when about to preach on this subject, apprehensive that your people might suppose you were inclined to plead your own cause, when preaching on this subject. On the other hand, the father of lies may suggest, "If you press the various institutions of benevolence upon the attention of the people, your own support will be diminished or retarded." It is possible he may make the suggestion through some of the leading members of the Church—as desirable an agency for him, as any other, if they only consent to serve. Take the following fact as an illustration. A minister, who was somewhat ardent in his appeals to the

people, in behalf of the various benevolent institutions of the Church, was about to introduce some of them to his people, early in the Conference year. The wealthiest of the stewards said to him, "Brother ——, you had better let these subjects remain till toward the close of the year, as it will be a detriment to your support, to present them so early in the Conference year. Let us get your salary raised first." The minister replied, "I am willing to give these matters an equal chance with my claim." So on he went, trusting in the Lord, and trying to present these matters as faithfully as he could to the people. The sequel exhibited not only an advance of more than one hundred per cent. on some of the collections of the preceding year, but likewise a more prompt support of their minister than any which the records of all their preceding history could furnish.

Every minister may be assured that there is truth and philosophy in the statement of Rev. E. A. Lawrence : "The specific for a pastor to starve himself away from his people is, to decline instructing them in the duty of benefi-

cence, and to withhold from them a knowledge of the wants of a perishing world. By such a course, he injures both them and himself, and dishonors his Master."

There are thousands in our land, who only need to have their duty plainly and faithfully set before them ; convince them that God requires a methodized arrangement of their beneficence, and soon the system will be adopted by such as *honestly inquire* what the will of the Lord is concerning them. Then their example would influence others to adopt the practice.

We look back upon a general neglect of the ministry, relating to the prevalent evil of *intemperance*, and the inquiry sometimes arises, whether it was possible to be genuine Christians, while giving countenance to a sin in the Church of God, of which a mere moralist would now be ashamed. And I apprehend that our descendants will look back, with similar feelings, upon our disobedience and habitual violation of the plain and specific command of God, relating to Methodistic beneficence.

My brother, let me ask, what opinion you

would have of a co-temporary minister, whose people were all living in constant violation of the holy Sabbath, utterly neglecting that command of God, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?" The minister never preaches on the subject, though he is apprized of the fact that his people are constantly violating this command of God! Suppose that such a minister and his Church were planted by your side. You sensibly feel the baneful influence of their example. What, I ask, would be your idea of their piety?—of their zeal for the honor of God?—and, of his commandments? And is the command in Exodus more obligatory on the Christian Church, than the mandate in 1st Corinthians, "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him," &c.?

Christians evidently begin to wake up to this neglected duty. The evangelical Churches seem to regard this lack of systemized Christian beneficence, as the great sin of the day. Hence the numerous calls for "prize essays" on the subject. This is well, but frequent preaching on the subject would be much better.

The ministry, and a few of the laity, may read such essays, but the great mass of the people will not be induced to read them.

However numerous and able such essays may become, unless the ministers commence *talking* on the subject, we need not expect our philanthropic finances to become systemized and efficient as they ought to be. The word of inspiration says, "*the priests' lips should keep knowledge.*" He *may* write good books, to stir up the people, on important Bible doctrines which are neglected, but he *should* preach. He is God's authorized expounder of the word, for "he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." "*Thou shalt speak my words* unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." His word, in a variety of ways, and in various places, enjoins the duty of *methodical beneficence*. Were the time, talent and energy now consecrated to controversial theology and religious wranglings amongst the different denominations, devoted to this great question, we should soon witness a great in-gathering of the tithes into the store-house of the Lord, and the opening of the windows of heaven, and out-

pouring of that blessing, which there is not room enough to receive, that would constrain the various Churches to enlarge their borders for its reception. Surely, on this subject, the preachers of Methodism ought to speak frequently and emphatically, when there are so few, even among the Methodists, who have yet methodized this branch of Christian duty. Their name should reprove them for this neglect.

We may have old-fashioned, powerful and extensive revivals ; but unless they are accompanied with thorough instruction relating to this neglected Christian duty, the desired result will not be produced. We need not expect that revivals will rectify the defects of Christian character, which are the result of a defective Christian education. When the ministers of Christ can be induced to *set the example, and teach* the doctrine of systematic beneficence, then, and not till then, may we expect to see the people generally coming up to the high and responsible calling of Methodist beneficence.

A personal friend, in the Baptist ministry, informs me that he has been presenting this

subject to his people, and that two-thirds of the membership, with himself, have adopted and signed a pledge, something like the following, and are now acting in accordance therewith, greatly to the advantage of the cause of God.

“Whereas, the Scriptures require every one regularly to ‘lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him,’ I covenant with my brethren, and with my God, on every Lord’s day, or at other stated periods, to set apart for the cause of beneficence, such a portion of my income as my sense of duty shall dictate.”

